THE TRIAL OF CHRIST

JOHN BRAYSHAW KAYE

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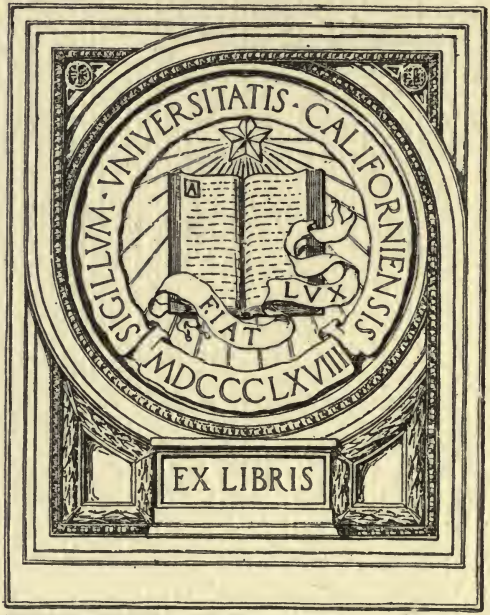

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THE TRIAL OF CHRIST

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IN SEVEN STAGES

A Poem

BY

JOHN BRAYSHAW KAYE

Author of "Vashti," "Songs of Lake Geneva," etc.

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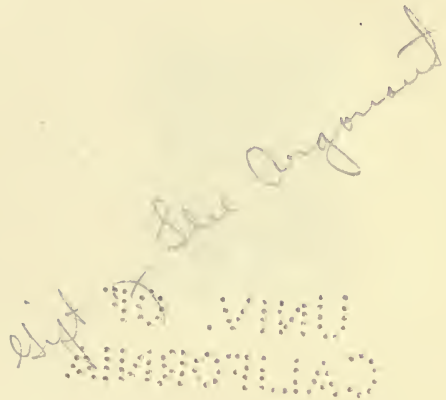

TO ALL WHO
LOVE CHRIST AND HIS TRUTH
AND
HATE INJUSTICE AND PERSECUTION
THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED

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PREFACE

For many years I have contemplated writing, in the form of a poem, what seems to me, beside the meager details given in the Gospels, the probable, or at least not improbable, facts of the procedure and the language and conduct of all concerned in that most tremendous and far-reaching in results of all legal — or illegal — human tragedies, The Trial of Christ.

The subject has had a kind of fascination for me, and I have thought of it much, but until the last two years, I had found no opportunity to enter upon the task. In doing so at last, I have approached the subject from the standpoint of the lawyer, not that of the preacher or the theologian, yet in a spirit of absolute reverence and that love of truth (so far as authorities show or probabilities to me suggest) which was the most noted characteristic of the Master of Nazareth, the Defendant, who solely relied upon truth, and was willing to live or to die for it, as its upholding by Him or ignoring by others might seem to require in His great mission.

In attempting this great task, I shall stray somewhat (as the evidence and the probabilities seem to me to require) from the beaten path in

the portrayal of the character and of the motives of Judas Iscariot, the traitor, who, I think it may be assumed without doubt, witnessed every phase of the trial of his Master, from the opening arraignment before Annas, the real High-Priest, to the closing condemnation before the entire Sanhedrin, presided over by the titular High-Priest, Caiaphas. In doing this, I shall not attempt to palliate the real offence of Judas, but to show, as I believe, that he had no desire or thought of bringing about the crucifixion, or any other corporal punishment of his Master, but sought partly for his own ambitious ends to place Christ in a position where He must assert His supernatural power for His own safety and the perpetuity of His teachings, and in so doing confound and overwhelm His enemies and detractors, and thus establish right in the headquarters of the Temple Hierarchy the conclusiveness of Christ's claim as the Messiah, and at the same time by this master stroke settle on himself the premiership in the Master's kingdom, the real nature of which neither he nor any other of the Twelve seemed at that time fully to understand.

There is probably no character in history, sacred or profane, ancient or modern, against whom great evil has been charged, in which so

much of that charged evil seems to have less foundation than in the case of Judas Iscariot. This condition arises mostly from prejudice, and though this prejudice is natural and there has been much to arouse it, prejudice should never be allowed to usurp the premises of truth, or to assume to speak in its name. Once thoroughly aroused by a prominent advocate, especially if in derogation of an abhorrent personage, or in sympathy with our religious beliefs or abstract righteousness, prejudice, which is the parent of error, perpetuates itself, and so is able to exhibit on the lists of its advocates the names of many great and good men.

These, in the case of Judas Iscariot, have doubtless been influenced in most cases by the written assertions of others who preceded them, and by their own eagerness to add their condemnation to so odious a character, and so also to give voice to an aggressive zeal,— and all without serious thought or sufficient investigation. Yet this is not the teaching of Christ. This is not the searching for, or upholding of, that Truth for which He died. There is nothing in the Gospels that has been so harped upon by modern writers, or so effectively used to make doubly black the name and character of Judas as the merely abusive

epithet of St. John, who bitterly disliked Judas for personal reasons; for Judas, like John himself, had striven for first place among the Twelve, and had actually taken precedence of John in his place next to Christ at the table at the Last Supper, according to Edersheim.[1] The passage in St. John to which reference is made is the anointing of Christ with the contents of the alabaster box by Mary of Bethany:

> Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because *he was a thief*, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. John 12:4–6.

Now this is the only place in the Bible where Judas is called a *thief*. St. John was probably an eye-witness, but wrote this in his old age and about forty years after the event described. If this term used by John was not used as a mere epithet, then the matters related, on which it was evidently based, not only do not show that Judas was a thief (even in contemplation), but plainly imply the contrary. The ointment belonged to Mary. She had not offered to donate

[1] "Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah." Vol. 2, p. 493.

it to the common treasury. If it might have been sold for three hundred pence and the price given to the poor, the implication was that Mary herself might have sold it and given the price to the poor, not that it should have been turned over to the disciples for that purpose. But though Judas carried the bag, and Mary had turned the ointment over for the benefit of the common purse, and Judas *might* have appropriated it for his own use, would that make Judas a thief? Judas never had it, much less the *price* of it, and so could not and did not steal it, and from those premises at least was not a thief. But if Judas had had a dishonest propensity, it does not seem that the other disciples, or the Master, would without objection, so far as known, have kept him through the entire ministry of our Lord in the important office of treasurer.

But Matthew was also a disciple and an eyewitness to this same transaction, and writes at a much earlier date concerning the same anointing:

> But when his *disciples* saw it they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor, etc. Matt. 26:8, 9, and following.

While Mark, who was the scribe and reporter of Peter in his evangelical labors, and probably got it so from Peter's own lips not long after the crucifixion, gives it:

> And there were *some* that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. Mark 14:4, 5, and following.

So, according to Matthew, the disciples saw it and *they* had indignation and complained of the waste; while according to Mark there were *some* that had indignation within themselves and asked why this waste of the ointment was made.

Now Matthew's account puts John, who was also present, into the position of joining all the others in saying what John attributes to Judas alone, while Mark's account, which naturally includes John as being present, says only that *some* had indignation, etc., which might, or might not, include John. At all events, according to these accounts, there were other disciples beside Judas who murmured against the so-called waste, and there seems to have been no protest against these murmurings by John (or any other disciple) until forty years afterward,

when the ill repute of Judas was on everyone's lips, when he writes that one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him, complained of the waste, etc. It may be, as John states, that Judas did the talking or most of it, but it is very evident that all the other disciples joined or acquiesced in the complaint about the waste. But there is a still more conclusive proof than these to show that John used the word *thief* as he applied it to Judas merely as a bitter epithet, and that he was wrong or mistaken in his assumed motives of Judas, and that is the position and the word of the Master Himself.

All accounts agree on the *stated* motive of the objection, by whomsoever made, and there is no substantial difference in their wording. Let us again take John's version:

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

Parenthetically, before we look at the answer of Christ, let us repeat John's pitiful assumption:

(This he said not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief and had the bag and bare what was put therein). Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath

she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. John 12:7–8.

From the form of the pronoun *ye* it is manifest that the Master addressed Himself to all of the disciples, not to Judas alone. More to the point, however, Jesus seems to have assumed the perfect good faith of the protest and recognized its validity under ordinary conditions, but obviated its force by one of His most celebrated aphorisms, obvious to all mankind on call of their attention, yet too frequently overlooked: "The poor always ye have with you;" (and therefore they might always be helped by the charitably inclined) "but me ye have not always." Christ was unfailing in His perception and denunciation of falsehood and hypocrisy in every quarter. Would He have let it pass and assumed that it did not exist in one or more of His chosen ones on an occasion like this? This query admits of but one answer: He would have perceived their wickedness, and repeated, in effect, probably: "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" (Matt. 22:18.) The evidence then seems clear that the passage, particularly first above quoted from John, was dictated, if not by abhorrence, by anger and resentment. That John, with all his lovable qualities and general

sweetness of character, was subject to the weakness last named, as well as to a love of authority, a passion for revenge, and great earthly ambition, is well shone in the instances of his wishing to call down fire from heaven to destroy the inhospitable Samaritan village (Luke 9:54), the forbidding of one not a disciple to cast out devils in Christ's name (Mark 9:38 and Luke 9:49), and his clamoring like the others for a high place in the coming kingdom (Mark 10:35, 37), while his egotism is in no wise covered by his oft-repeated reference to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. All these little shortcomings of his, save the last, seem to have been forgotten by John, as one may look in vain for mention of them in his Gospel; while the Synoptists seem to have been free to admit and record most of the failings of all the disciples, and Matthew, who was there, says that at the time of the arrest: "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled." (Matt. 26:56.) The Synoptists all state that Peter followed afar off, but omit to state that John also followed,— an oversight which John corrects in this wise: "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple." (John 18:15), but omits against the evidence to state that it was "afar off." All this goes to show that

John, even in his old age, was subject to many of the common foibles of humanity, even to his reverent use of hyperbole, exhibited in the last verse of his truly wonderful Gospel. Indeed, John's luxuriant humanism as shown by the entire Gospel record and emphasized by the extra antagonism to Judas and the evident bias toward himself of the author of the Fourth Gospel is, in my estimation, the strongest refutation of the critics, and seems to establish beyond doubt that the author was none other than John of the Twelve and sometime companion of Judas.

Yet the passage quoted from John seems to have served as a foundation for most of the unfounded charges against Judas. For instance, Rev. Matthew Henry more than two hundred years ago in his "Exposition with Practical Observations of the Gospel According to St. John," under Chapter XII, among several pages given to the denunciation of, and moralizing on, the character of Judas, says: "We have little reason to be fond of the bag, or proud of it, for at best we are but stewards of it, and it was Judas, one of an ill character and born to be hanged (pardon the expression), that was steward of it; the prosperity of fools destroys them. Being trusted with the bag, he was a thief, i. e., he had a thievish disposition. The

reigning love of money is heart-theft, as much as anger and revenge is *heart-murder.* Or perhaps he had been really guilty of embezzling his Master's stores, and converting them to his own use, which were to be given to the public flock. And some conjecture that he was now contriving to fill his pockets and then run away, etc." It will be hard to discover the logic of why, being *trusted* with the bag, Judas was a thief, or had a thievish disposition. This seems like an attempt of the author to excuse St. John's assertion, and still shows that it was only an epithet, and so far as Gospel authority goes is wholly without support.

About this same matter, Canon Farrar writes, in part, on this anointing of Christ: "But there was one present to whom on every ground the act was odious and repulsive. There is no vice at once so absorbing and unreasonable, and so degrading, as the vice of avarice, and avarice was the besetting sin in the dark soul of the traitor Judas." [1]

Aside from the statement of St. John and this one act itself (of Judas, with the other disciples all assenting), I find no authority in the Gospels or elsewhere in the New Testament for this declaration, yet most of the modern writers on

[1] Farrar's "Life of Christ." Vol. II, p. 496.

this subject have enlarged on this *besetting sin.*

But Farrar continues: "That little touch about its being 'given to the poor' is a very instructive one. It was probably the veil used by Judas to half conceal even from himself the grossness of his own motives — the *fact* that he was a petty thief, and really wished the charge of this money because it would have enabled him to add to his own store," etc.[1]

Farrar here boldly assumes it to be the fact that Judas was a petty thief, and wished the charge of this money (that never existed except in the imagination of his accusers) that he might add to his own store. Of these assertions by this eminent churchman, theologian, and scholar, I believe from what I am able to discover, and from the surroundings, there is neither proof nor probability.

In the "Life of Jesus the Christ" by our own Beecher, though not prepared by him, as it seems to have been added in the completing of the second volume after Beecher's death, it is said, referring to the same matter: "For the pretense upon which Judas had condemned this proceeding was that this ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor. John rather briefly and curtly says of

[1] Id., p. 497.

Judas: 'He said this because he was a thief and carried the bag.' It was to have gone into the treasury; and if, as he thought it seemed likely, there was to be a dispersion of this little band, in the scattering he would carry away what was in the bag. This last emphatic title would seem to do away with all the fine-spun theories which would alleviate the guilt of Judas. He was an extremely avaricious man; avarice was his leading trait; he found fault with tokens of affection for avaricious reasons and finally sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver." [1]

On the same subject, Edersheim in his "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah" in part has this to say: "It is ever the light which throws the shadows of objects, and this deed of faith and love now cast the features of Judas in gigantic dark outlines against the scene. He knew of Christ's betrayal, and hated the more; she knew the nearness of His precious death, and loved the more. It was not that he cared for the poor, when, taking the mask of charity, he simulated anger that such costly ointment had not been sold and the price given to the poor. For he was *essentially a thief*, and covetousness was the underlying master-passion of his

[1] Vol. II, pp. 214, 215.

soul. This money claimed for the poor would have been used only for himself. Yet such was his pretense of righteousness, such his influence as a man of prudence among the disciples, and such their sad weakness, that *they*, at least *some*, expressed indignation among themselves, and against her who had done this deed of love, etc." [1]

Where did John stand in this expression of indignation against Mary? Surely he must have either joined in it, "or remained silent when he should have spoken" to protest against it. Yet it was on John's unsupported assertion written forty years after the event that the author quoted states that Judas was essentially a thief, and that the money claimed for the poor would have been used only by himself. The very apparent difficulty to any one who will take the trouble to think about this assumption is that no money was claimed for the poor or for any one else. Mr. Edersheim does say, however, on good authority, that at least some of the other disciples expressed indignation among themselves at what was done by Mary. Aside from the Master, Mary seems to have been the only one of the company who believed, or at least realized, that He was about to suffer

[1] Vol. II, pp. 359, 360.

death, and this seems to account for their attitude on that occasion. But Edersheim accounts for it on the ground of the influence of Judas as a man of prudence, etc., and of their own weakness. Judas had been the treasurer of the little band during the whole Ministry of Christ,— nearly three years. If Judas were a thief, if he were dishonest, avaricious, looking after self, and all the other things charged, which would unfit him for his position, the disciples must have known it by that time, and his influence as a *man of prudence* would be less than nothing with them. That Judas held his place as treasurer and was intrusted to distribute alms to the poor at the order of the Master, even up to the occasion of the Last Supper, is shown casually by John himself in a passage broadly inconsistent with the one quoted, when Christ said to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly":

> Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. John 13:28–29.

So Edersheim says in the passage quoted

from his book, "Judas knew of Christ's betrayal at that time." I cannot find in the sacred text that until *after* the anointing at Bethany Judas had contemplated, or even thought of, a betrayal of the Master.

Plainly Judas has enough to answer for to his God and to history without any draft against him on the imagination of men, a draft which they probably justify on the theory that the extra degradation of Judas adds to the exaltation of Christ, a principle that brought into being the Spanish Inquisition, that lighted the Smithfield fires, that burned Servetus at the stake, and that for more than nineteen hundred years has been pursued by many of those calling themselves Christians against the Jews for what their fathers did or omitted to do many scores of generations ago.

Another instance of how the epithet of John has furnished modern writers with an assumed indictment against Judas is shown from two passages in "Life and Words of Christ" by Dr. C. Geikie, speaking of Judas: "Once a disciple from honest anxiety, he continued one, in outward form, as an adventurer. Gain became a passion with him, till under the very eyes of his Master he *embezzled* as *treasurer* the petty funds in his hands. To the mean and

sordid heart of Judas the bounty of Mary had sufficed to kindle smouldering resentment and disloyalty to a flame. If ruin were certain, he would profit if he could before it was all over. If Jesus must fall into the hands of His enemies, he might as well get money by what was unavoidable. Had not He, argued the diseased spirit, disappointed him, led him about for years in hope of gain in the end, and had he not now told him that the only inheritance he could expect was poverty and suffering? He would go to the high-priests and see what could be done." [1]

As to Judas knowing of Christ's betrayal at the time of this anointing, as asserted by Edersheim, that could have been nothing more than an opinion, and is quite contrary to the opinion or conclusion of Canon Farrar, referred to in Vol. 2, p. 555, footnote, as follows: "2. We conclude that the loss of the three hundred pence was the cause of the betrayal, from the pointed manner in which the latter is narrated in immediate proximity to the former, etc." Is not this a strange conclusion? It does not appear that Judas or any of the other disciples ever knew of this ointment owned by Mary till after the anointing of our Savior was well be-

[1] Vol. II, pp. 459, 460.

gun, and possibly over, and when Mary was wiping His feet with her hair. So that if the avarice of Judas was excited, it was after the object of it was expended and even the receptacle, the alabaster box, broken. When Judas then protested against the waste, it was after what he termed the waste had been committed and immediately after he first knew that the ointment had existed. There was then no loss of three hundred pence, and the thing itself, which belonged to Mary, and according to Judas might have been sold for that amount, was consumed. Judas could not have betrayed his Master because of the loss of the three hundred pence which he never had, and in the nature of things never could have come into the possession of, which in fact never existed, and at the time of the protest had no existing commodity to base its value upon. How then could it be fairly concluded that the *loss* of the three hundred pence was the cause of the betrayal?

Judas betrayed his Master; whatever the cause of that heinous act may have been, it seems clear that it could *not* have been the one suggested. My own opinion of the cause of this monstrous act of Judas (and it is not new) is further disclosed as assumed and related by

Judas himself in what follows, in "The Trial of Christ."

In any trial before the Sanhedrin, every member of that body was in some sense an advocate, and had the right to speak before the whole court for or against the accused, as he felt disposed. This fact is conclusively shown by the adjuration of Caiaphas and his declaration that the Master had spoken blasphemy and his "What further need have we of witnesses? Behold now ye have heard his blasphemy." (Matt. 26: 65–66.) All this was highly argumentative and against the Accused. The same is shown by the successful advocacy of the Apostles by Gamaliel before the Council or Sanhedrin, recorded in Acts 5: 27–40, in consequence of which the Sanhedrin only beat them and let them go. As a rule, the younger members voted first, under the theory that they might not be influenced by the expressed views of their older and more experienced brothers of the Sanhedrin.

It is not likely, in so momentous a matter as the trial of Christ, that the most learned and influential members at least would not avail themselves of this right to be heard, while the younger and less experienced would rather avoid the responsibility of putting themselves forward

as advocates in so tremendous an issue, and depend on their votes only to express their will.

I have assumed accordingly that short addresses were made, alternately as in a debate, *pro* and *con*, by several of the leading Sanhedrists, and have given them as they fell upon the ears of the listening Judas. They are imaginary in their wording and order, of course; but that they contain the matter and the facts suggested by the situation on both sides to those present, learned in the Law, or well stocked in the trained casuistry of the pending inquiry — an inquiry or prosecution weak in its affirmative facts, but strong and confident in its affirmative bias — there can be little doubt.

There are those who seem to think of Nicodemus as a timid man, lacking in force of character and physical and moral courage, on the ground that he went to confer with Jesus at night. To me it seems that no charge could be more utterly unfounded. Nicodemus was deeply interested in the personality and the doctrine and teachings of the Master. What more natural and proper than that he should wish to see and converse with Christ alone, and not when He was absorbed and fully occupied in teaching a great throng, or engaged in the healing of their infirmities? At night, and alone

with Him, Nicodemus could, as he did, go at once to the subject in his own mind. That Nicodemus did not lack in courage is too well attested by his challenge to the Pharisees to admit question: "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" (John 7:51.) Can there be any doubt, then, that when they did go through the mockery of a trial of Him, Nicodemus having authority and the right to protest against its injustice, would raise his voice against it and the strange illegality of their procedure? And is not this made still more probable by the fact that when it was all over, and nothing to be gained, socially or financially, and everything to be lost, Nicodemus still showed his sympathy and adherence to His cause in openly assisting Joseph of Arimathea in the anointing and burial of His body?

The same reasoning applies to Joseph of Arimathea, for although he is spoken of as a secret disciple, yet when the hour of danger and trial came, he was an open adherent, and practically in the presence of the whole madly-excited priestly hierarchy went to Pilate openly to beg leave of him to take down from the Cross and care for and bury the body of his Master, an exhibition of courage and faithfulness not equaled by any of the Twelve, with the possible

exception of John, while in a worldly sense he had vastly more to lose than the latter. It seems highly probable, then, that with his right, his opportunity, and his established courage to befriend Jesus, he would not fail to raise his voice in His behalf in the shamefully irregular trial before the Sanhedrin.

As to Gamaliel, it is not to be doubted that he was present at the trial before the Sanhedrin, for it seems that all the members had been notified and the *whole council* held a consultation, and he was an eminent member of that body. It is on record that Gamaliel, though not exactly friendly, was still deeply impressed by the doings, the teachings, and the doctrine of Christ. He was also a calm and thoughtful man, learned in the Law, fair-minded and conscientious as a member of the trial court. His attitude may be fairly inferred to have been as expressed by him shortly after the crucifixion (Acts 5:38, 39), and it is almost certain that he would have still more fully and forcibly expressed his moderation and sense of justice at the trial of Christ, a matter involving life or death to the accused, involving the Master, not His disciples.

It seems highly probable that it was immediately after the trial and condemnation of

Christ by the Sanhedrin, and before that body had adjourned, that Judas in the agony of his remorse and the frenzy of his disappointment, in defiance of all consequences, and to bring home to the Sanhedrin official notice of his bribing by some of its members (the chief priests) threw down before *them*, the whole Sanhedrin, the hateful thirty pieces of silver. Judas then supposed, as did most of the Sanhedrists, that on their condemnation, Pilate would at once sentence his Master to the Cross. Those who had given the bribe to Judas were chief priests (Matt. 26:14–16; Mark 14:10–11; Luke 22:3–6). That all the chief priests were members of the Sanhedrin is made clear by Matthew 27:1. That they were all present there can be no doubt. That it was the proper time and place for Judas to expose the bribery, and offered the chance to throw the court into confusion, and possibly cause a revocation of the Master's sentence is evident. It is further probable that had not the bribery been thus publicly exposed, the world would never have known the chief priests' part in it. But Judas had miscalculated the Sanhedrists. The great majority of them were as guilty of injustice as the chief priests who weighed out the petty bribe to him.

In the matter of the several mockings and revilings to which Christ was subjected during the progress of His trial, it seems probable that in its verbal insolence and spoken and acted mockeries, though not in physical outrage, the one organized at the instance of Herod was the most ingeniously debasing or provoking in a human sense, but not the most brutal. It seems to have been turned into a public spectacle, a moving, clamorous and hilarious pageant in its shameless progress through the streets back to the court of Pilate. The lead in it was taken by the coarse soldiery and the idle courtiers of Herod, people who knew little or nothing of, and so cared nothing for, the recorded utterances of the Jewish prophets. The deriders took their cue from the shouted charges of the claim of kingship, and triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem, made by the priestly leaders and fiery zealots before Herod, and saw in it only a basis for ridicule, and an occasion for derisive mockery, coarse merriment, and shameless witticisms.

It was not an occasion of merriment with the Jews. For they learned it was in some sense a making light of their faith, their present earnest concern, and prophetic history; while the giving to Christ the title and mock adoration of King

of the Jews was looked upon as a mockery of these leading Jews themselves. It seems likely that this scoffing and derision in public by Herod's people suggested the further crowning, after His final reluctant condemnation by Pilate, by the Roman legionaries, before only themselves and for their own entertainment, in which the blows and the spitting figured so shamefully.

It is probable that the same gorgeous robe, if not the same crown of thorns, was employed as in the mocking pageant from Herod. In this last brutal spectacle it is certain that Pilate had no heart, and gave no direct encouragement, but, as in all his half-hearted better impulses of the day, he did not absolutely forbid it, fearing perhaps to break a precedent and deprive his soldiers of a little brutal pastime.

In the following poem it has not been thought best to cite notes or references: *first*, because in a work of this kind they tend to interrupt or break the reader's current of thought and feeling; and *second*, most of the implied authority for matters stated in the text being the Bible, any person warmly interested in any question suggested, in these times of concordances and word books, will naturally turn to them in search of the basis for the textual thought, and in this

accepted invitation, be brought to that vast storehouse of literary excellence, worldly wisdom, and spiritual insight, the Scriptures, to which he will thereafter be the more likely to return again and again.

To obtain the sidelights of different views in elaborating the Gospel story of the Trial, which, as is well known, is very brief in its detailed incidents, even when one combines the narratives of the Synoptists and of St. John, as one must to get that story complete, I have read with interest and some diligence the Lives of Christ — with varying titles — hereinbefore referred to, a translation of the "Life of Jesus" by Renan, a legendary and apocryphal Life by Donehoo, "The Death of Christ" by Denny, "The Trial of Jesus" by Giovanni Rosadi, "The Light of the World" by Edwin Arnold, beside what little I could gather from the Cyclopedias and from Josephus, Talmudic extracts, and many miscellaneous sources. But above all, and as the basis of all, I have relied on the four Gospels and that excellent aid to their study, "A Harmony of the Gospels" by Stevens and Burton.

I owe something to all of these modern writers in the way of historical details and suggested situations, but so far as many of the incidents are concerned, I cannot agree with any of them,

though in most things I differ from them hardly more than they differ from one another. This of course must necessarily be so, as long as men have to go for some of their material into the field of conjecture and seeming probability. For historical incidents and situations I am probably more indebted to Canon Farrar than to any of the others named, but gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to all for the full value received from each.

In dealing with the Trial of Christ, I have treated it as occurring at six different places, and at seven different intervals, in seven different stages, ending with and including the Crucifixion. Ordinarily the execution cannot be properly termed a part of a trial, but in some sense at least this was not the case with the Crucifixion of Christ. His prosecutors (and they included many of the Jewish hierarchy and part of the members of the Sanhedrin which had first condemned Him) were not satisfied with the final condemnation by Pilate, but must needs follow Him with taunts and jeers and bitter reproaches and insult to the foot of the Cross, and even ceased not when in agony He was nailed upon it.

It seems almost incredible that this can be true. Bodily, to the sufferer it mattered little,

but mentally and spiritually it was the most searching and terrible part of the awful trial or ordeal through which the Christ passed in the whole seven stages of the dreadful inquisition, which ended only with His death.

In writing of these things, nothing can be further from my mind than the entertaining of any ill will or prejudice on this account against the Jews of to-day. If the Jewish authorities of that day really believed Christ was an impostor, it is easy enough to imagine why they should wish to punish Him; but their evident self-interest, the intense bitterness, and unusual and unjust procedure all seem to point out the impossibility of such belief.

In some regards, the Jewish people must challenge the wonder and the admiration of the world. Once the chosen people of God, greatly favored for their good works in God's name, and as severely punished for their delinquencies, suffering as they have suffered unjust persecutions and intolerable wrongs at the hands of other peoples for nearly two thousand years, without a country, a government, or a rallying place, dispersed among all the peoples of all the world, and persecuted and abused to a certain extent by all, yet they have flourished and grown

rich in substance and increased in numbers. They are still a "peculiar people," perhaps still, in a sense, God's people, as they were from Abraham down.

One of the strange but evident things is that had the Jews as a people accepted Christ and His teachings when He was on earth, there would have been no Jews, no Jewish people, today. It has been and still is the hope of Christianity that the Jews may come at last to fully believe that the Christ was and is their hoped-for and true Messiah, and to embrace that faith which He sought to teach them. Yet if such shall come to be a fact, it means that Judaism must die, and with the extinction of their ancient faith, its peculiar rites, sacraments, and ceremonies, there could be nothing to obstruct their intermarrying with the peoples of all the countries in which they reside, and the consequent assimilation with these peoples, so that in a few generations the Jews as a distinct people would disappear, and be known no more except in history. This thought alone must exercise a mighty influence with the Jewish people. Once the dread of all the peoples with whom they came in hostile contact on account of their declared and admitted favor with God, they have

for nearly two thousand years been, to the shame of Christendom and the whole world, the butt and buffer of the nations.

The question of the Jews has been and is a problem of the ages, a problem it would seem that only God can solve in His own good time and way. What will the solution be?

J. B. K.

THE TRIAL OF CHRIST

STAGE I

THE BETRAYAL, ARREST, AND HEARING BEFORE ANNAS

(Musings and Comments of Judas.)

"HAVE I done mortal wrong? My heart is troubled
And my soul haunted by a thousand doubts.
But a short year agone, across the Lake
Straight from Capernaum on the other side,
Near to Bethsaida-Julias, on the grass,
After a term of teaching and much toil,
Healing and pointing out the Heavenly Way,
Time passed in pinioned flight till evening shades
Stretched lengthening eastward, and the night was near,
When Christ, discerning the great multitude,
More than five thousand eager followers,
All absent from their homes, and much an hungred,
Ordered provision to be spread for them,
Fitly, and there, along the greening slopes;
And when advised, in answer to His query,
That five brown loaves and three small pickled fishes
Were all that our lean larder could supply,

He said, 'Let these be brought,' and it was done.
Then He, there breaking, without diminution,
Filled all the ready baskets of the Twelve,
Helmets and improvised receptacles
Of various kinds for ordered distribution
To the long lines of now recumbent followers,
Told into fifties some, and into hundreds,
Till all were fed, and all were satisfied;
And, provident still, in His Life-Lessons, there
Ordered the fragments gathered that were left,
The whole exceeding in an hundred fold
The food with which the feeding had begun.

"Excitement was intense! The exaltation
Of all the Messianic prophecies
Seeming to center round the Master's form
Leaped for assertion to ten thousand lips
And sounded on the air one grand Hosanna:
'Our King and Counselor! The Sent of God!
Thou Matchless Prophet of the Line of David!
Deliverer, Messiah, Hope of Jewry!
Hail and be crowned! We are thy followers
In life and death! Lead and we'll cleave to
Thee!
The Temple is Thy Court, Israel Thy King-
dom!'

" And I, yea I, did join in the acclaim
(As did each of the others of the Twelve),
This sweet delirium of expectancy
Voiced by so many with such burning zeal;
And yet He would not so, but bade us take
Unto our waiting ship and haste away
Back toward Capernaum, from whence we'd
come.
Being so constrained, we took unto the sea
With much reluctance, casting longing looks
Back at the throng, while we pulled at our oars.

" Soon we discerned the shouting multitude
Melting away, and, as we after learned,
Under the spur of His yet kind reproof
Checking the world-ambition in their hearts
And speaking of a Spiritual Kingdom
Which He had come to found upon the earth,
They thus departed — calmed and mollified,
Yet pondering vaguely on the things He spake;
Then climbed He up the mountain-side to pray.

" The night that followed — Oh, I see it still
In its vast awe-inspiring mysteries
Of life and death and helplessness and power;—
The wind, upstarting straight ahead of us
And springing to the stature of a gale,
When not one-half the passage had been made,

Lashed the blue waters into combing waves
Whipping our vessel's bow with foaming spume,
As some pulled, vainly laboring at the oars,
While others bailed to keep our ship afloat;
When, all worn to exhaustion with the toil,
We did descry a figure like a wraith
Walking amid the waves which bent their crests
Curling away from it on either side;
And trembling we called out. Fear loosed our hands,
Our oars hung idle in their dripping locks
And soon we must have perished; when a voice,
Calm and unruffled through the howling storm,
Even and clear amid the seething waves,
Spake safety for us all,
'Be of good cheer!'
This well had been enough, for that same voice
To us was as a shepherd's to his flock,
The most familiar voice in all the world,
Breathing assurance; then He further soothed
And calmed all our past terrors with
''Tis I!
Be not afraid!'
Then the quick-daring one,
Bar-Jona, called out, 'Lord, if it be Thou,
Bid me to come to Thee!' Then th' Master:
'Come!'
And as a trusting child from some near height

Might drop into its mother's open arms,
Did he, the impulsive Peter, straightway leap
Into the foaming tumult, and strode forth;
But the fierce winds twisted the white-plumed
waves
Hissing about his knees; fear seized his soul,
And as the Deep gave way beneath his feet
He did call out, 'Lord, save me or I sink!'
And so the Master, stretching forth His hand,
Caught Peter, brought him safely to the ship,
And gently chided him for lack of faith,
Bidding the while the tempest to be still
And quieting the waters with a word
Into a peaceful calm; and we, in awe
And reverent wonder, knelt and worshipped
Him,
Saying, 'Of a truth Thou art the Son of God!'

"Then we rowed safely, beaching at the plain
Gennesaret, and many met us there
And knew Christ when He landed from the ship,
While those who lingered on the other shore,
Deeming the Master still not far away,
Finding Him not, learned of His being with us
Safe on the western side, and wondering,
Some came in ships and followed, and still more
Skirting the northern margin of the Lake

Came hurrying afoot to join the throng
Which now was gathering from every side.

"All now moved joyfully from place to place,
Some wondering, some doubting, some perplexed,
Till we again entered Capernaum,
Wherein the Master sought the synagogue,
And there He taught, discoursing to the throng;
But ere we'd reached that place, many that hedged
The highways and the streets did call on Him —
The sick, the halt, the blind, and from afar
The leprous,—'Son of David, Sent of God!
Have mercy on us, Lord, and make us whole!'
And all who might, approached and touched His garments,
And all were healed and joyfully went their way,
Praising His name. And when He, halting, spake,
Certain espying crafty Pharisees
Challenged His right of healing on the Sabbath
And sneeringly instanced His sometime act —
Partaking meat, they claimed, with unwashed hands,
Both He and His apostles, 'gainst the Law,
An act of gross defilement. He did look
Upon them with pitying concern;

Then with parable, or well-grounded maxim,
Or an apt instance from the Higher Law,
Reduced He them to silence, but their hatred
Blazed to hostility, and 'mong the throng
They sought to poison whom they might against
Him.

"Of those who'd been among the fed five thousand,
After now list'ning to His wondrous doctrine,
Some questioned as to their own proper conduct
(Prompted thereto by scheming Pharisees
And their Sadducean co-conspirators)
To work the works of God; and then He spake:
'Believe on Him, the Christ Whom He hath sent.'

"Then called they for a sign. Moses had given
Unto their fathers in the wilderness
The manna David psalmed 'the bread from Heaven,'
While He had given them earth's barley loaves
Only, and fishes from the near-by Lake,
Belittling thus their late miraculous feeding.
And Jesus, flushing at the prompted question,
Told them still kindly that the given manna

Was not from Moses, truly, but from God,
Who also gave, who would, the Bread of Life,
And they perceiving not the metaphor:
'Lord, now and always give us of this bread!'
And He forthwith:
'I am the Bread of Life,
And he that cometh to Me ne'er shall hunger
And who believeth in Me shall not thirst.'
These words, or these in substance, I remember
Caused a great flutter 'mong the Pharisees
There spying on the Master for some breach
Against the faith or tenets of the Jews.

"And they industriously amid the throng
Spake their objections, hissing their dissent
As fierce as serpents, with their acrid venom
Poisoning the minds of all they could against
Him,
And laboring most among His followers.
And then the Master, bearing the metaphor
To its one just conclusion, following still
The figurative symbolism chosen:
'This Bread is so my Flesh which I do give
And freely, as the ransom of the World.
Except you eat this flesh of the Son of Man
And drink His blood, ye have no life in you.
Who eateth of this Bread shall live forever.'

"And then these Pharisees pretending horror:
'How could a man partake of this Man's flesh
And drink his blood? And He doth claim to be
Come down from Heaven. Truly is this not
The son of Joseph, one time carpenter
Of Nazareth, whom not e'en His kin believe?'
But when these spies in turn were set upon
And sharply questioned by His followers,
Saying, 'How could He perform these mighty works
Which He has done before our open eyes
Unless He were of God? or speak this wisdom,
On perfect Knowledge founded, couched in words
Framed in unanswerable, simple logic,
Were God not with Him? Can ye tell us this?'
Then they, made mad in their discomfiture:
'He doeth these things through Satan and his Power!
Doth God oppose His own? Is Moses' law
Now come to be a groundless allegory,
And all the teachings of our mighty rabbis
As empty nothings, or as active evil?
To what are we now tending when the sons
Of Abraham go crazed o'er this pretender,
This smooth deceiver, this low Antichrist?
Break now away from Him ere you be lost!'

"Thus many, seeing not the shallowness
Of these unfounded and unjust assertions,
And so being seriously impressed thereby,
Were turned away from Him, and I was troubled;
And so not only I, but all the Twelve
Were visibly depressed; and seeing which
(Yet in all things remained our faith unbroken
In Him, our Shepherd and our Tower of Strength),
And that dejection dwelt upon our faces,
He added:
'Will ye also go away?'
And spake it in deep sorrow, to which Peter
Speaking for all:
'To whom, Lord, shall we go?
Thou hast the Words of everlasting Life,
But we believe it and are sure thereof,
Thou art the Holy One of God!'
To which:
'You Twelve have I not chosen, and one a devil?'
Could then the Master have referred to me?
I cannot think it so; still in the light
Of these red fitful lamps that in their glare
Offend the white-faced moon this fateful night,
I am disturbed in looking back to it.

" Yet, later, did He speak about twelve thrones
We Twelve should occupy, and later still
Did He not send us all deputed fully
To heal the halt and bring light to the blind
And also cast out devils in His name?
So when this thing was spoken, 'twas in blame —
A passing epithet — belike 'gainst me
For some delinquency not manifest
Fairly to all, for surely a devil fully fledged
He would not name to cast out his own kind,
And in the name, too, of the Sinless One;
And even after this, when Peter sought
To state what might not be, did not the Master
Most sharply chide him:
'Get behind Me, Satan?'
But this most keen rebuke did not impugn
The honest good in his impulsive nature,
Nor make of him a fiend, nor was it meant so
I must believe; but still my soul is troubled.
And it was troubled on that Sabbath day
There at the synagogue, another way,
For then I saw His followers turned from Him
By false connivance and unjust abuse,
Hinting at evil by the Prince of Good.

" I've seen the gathering hordes of opposition
In power and place, about Jerusalem,

And these still gaining strength, in these last
days,
From much desertion by His followers,
Urged by the spies of these same enemies
Who dog His footsteps with vindictive stealth,
Hunting for scraps to feed their hatred on,
To His undoing,— scraps to formulate
And charge offense to Israel's God-given Law.
And now what have I done?
Acted the traitor
That the whole world might see the vicious
schemings,
The petty plannings of His enemies
Dissolved to nothingness, their armèd strength
Fall impotent 'neath His reproving glance,
Their outstretched hands drop numbed and
powerless
On their profaning contact with His person.
Was I not present in the Temple Court,
Over against the Porch of Solomon,
Just a short space agone, when He,
Speaking of God there to the listening throng,
Cried out to them in fervor, saying,
'I know Him,
For I am from Him! and He hath sent Me.'
And the chief priests ordered their officers
There to lay hold on Him and firmly bind Him.

But these stood spellbound by His wondrous
words
And had not power to raise a hand against him,
And on returning unto those who sent them
These taunted them for cowardly lack of duty,
And sneering asked: 'Why have ye brought
Him not?'
And the sturdy bailiffs could but answer them
This and no more:
'Never man spake like this man.'
Then so the Pharisees:
'Are ye deceived
As also others are?' But their cheeks blanched
As looked they on the faces of these men
Set in a fixed expression, part of awe
And of deep reverence part, and so the sneers
Curling the priestly lips smoothed out in fear,
And their hot anger melted to dismay.

"Then Nicodemus, standing close at hand,
To break the keen restraint that held them all,
And speak a word for Christ, and one for Jus-
tice:
'Doth our law ever judge of any man
Before it hear him and know what he doeth?'
And they, ignoring the condemning query,
Put it aside, hiding behind reproach,

And thrust forth falsehood as a fact assured,
Both thus:
'Art thou also of Galilee?
Search thou and look, for out of Galilee
Arose no prophet since the world began.'
Still they went forth abashed, each to his house.

"So shall it be to-night, as I believe,
Or, if He choose, forsooth, to go with them
Into their courts and councils, as before,
In controversy, He shall still prevail.

"But this fair picture hath its somber tints,
And as I hear this force passing the wall
(Whose mighty stones do hedge the Holy City),
Murd'ring the moonlight with their smoking lamps,
Offending with War's staves the Prince of Peace,
And cross the Kedron, and slow clamber up
The slope of Olivet with the set purpose
To apprehend the Master, my limbs quake
And my soul trembles in its fleshly house.

"But now we near the fenced Gethsemane.
(My heart, be still!) Within its moon-cast shades

The Master somewhere bides with His disciples,
All, mayhap, but myself. The Roman tribune
With half a hundred from Antonia's Tower,—
Rough legionaries panoplied for war,
The Temple Captain and his squad of guards,
Some priests and scribes, and an unseemly rabble,—
The restless scum floating about the city,
In part, and partly Zealots to the faith,
And mostly armed with rude offensive staves,
All swarm about, the onward march at end,
Clutching their weapons with fear's trembling gripe,
Even the troops grasping their carven hilts
As if near ambush by some desperate force.
So they group trembling and I step afront
To point the Master out as I'd agreed,
Greeting him blandly with a traitor kiss.
(Alas the day, if this prove fully true.)
'Hail, Rabbi, Hail!' He answering and thus:
'Friend, wherefore art thou come?'
Now he confronts
The armèd minions clustered thereabout:
'Whom seek ye?'
And they faintly answer Him,
'Jesus of Nazareth!' and He announces calmly,
'I am He!'
Ha! See them fall! Three deep

The circled trembling host goes down,
As if a bolt from Heaven had smitten them
Prone to the earth. 'Tis as I thought!
These priests,
These prudish scribes and Pharisaic scoffers,
Shall now behold and fully realize
That God's Power fills the Man of Nazareth,
And fittingly receive Him. But what's this?
The leveled minions struggle to their feet
And once again press in upon Him there,
And He again:
'Whom seek ye?'
And again
One found his voice: 'Jesus of Nazareth.'
And He:
'Have I not told you I am He?'
Then they advance on Him with outstretched hands,
Seeking to seize Him, and I am appalled
At their audacity. And rash Bar-Jona,
Saying, 'Master, shall I smite?' drew out his sword,
The rusty hanger of a fisherman,
And ere Christ could advise him he smites off
The ear of Malchus with a swinging blow,
And Malchus is servant of the present High-priest;
But Christ turning to Peter calmly saith:

'Put up again thy sword into its place,
For all that take the sword shall thereby perish.'
Now doth He touch the ear of him so smitten,
Saying,
'Suffer thou thus far,'
and made him whole.
Thus doth He good still to His enemies.
And turning now unto the armèd throng:
'Are ye come out here as against a thief,
With swords and staves to take Me? I sat daily
Among you teaching in the Temple, and ye laid
Not hold on Me!'
These words do seem to lift
A heavy load now weighing on my spirit,
For they do seem to lessen my abasement
In pointing out our Master to the throng
Whose leaders are so shown to know Him well,
And daily had their opportunity
To apprehend Him. So hoped I my mad act
Might find atonement under my intent
And only good might come of it, though prompted
In part by my ambition. But they close in on Him,
For reasoning doth aye embolden fear,
And they lay hands on Him in violence,
And bind Him like a criminal with thongs,
Crossing His hands behind Him in rough haste,

O God! and perish not! His words of peace
Spoken to Peter have revived their courage,
Inflamed their hatred, and renewed their zeal
To heap upon His head their contumely,
Now fearing no more harm; and my poor soul
Doth shudder at itself for what I've done.
And the eleven flee into the shadows.

"So, unresisting, and hand-bound with thongs,
Jostled by ribald beggars from the mart,
And jeered by those who have him now in charge,
Under the stooping sky whose wondering stars
Flash from clear blue, or glance through moving rift,
Stricken with sorrow and a breaking heart
Amidst His captors now grown insolent
In reassurance from the lack of harm,
The Light of all the World in ignominy
Is dragged back to the city at night's noon,
Without a friend to cheer or comfort Him,
To answer charges of His enemies.

"O Peter! ever full of promises
And strong assurance of fidelity;
O Sons of Thunder! Thou, the white-souled John,
Whose head hath rested in the Master's bosom

Only this night with seeming sweet affection,
And truthful, trusting James, thy favored
brother —
Both of whose veins embank kin's ruddy strain
To that that's flooding now the Master's heart
So overwhelmed with sorrow;— and the rest,
All greater than myself in length of service;
Why fled ye when the chief-priests' bidden
minions
Laid violent hands upon Him? Of the Twelve
Not even one to openly declare
Allegiance and a deathless fealty,
With willingness to bide by and to suffer
In all things with Him if ye were permitted,
In the cold face of seeming present peril!

"Oh, it is pitiful! That any should 'proach
To my own faithlessness, now dawning on me
In all the horror of its heinousness,
Brings shame upon my soul! And yet what
right
Have I to criticise, and on what grounds,
The actions or the conduct of the others?
For it doth seem that their chief fault is fear,
While my own sin is fitly branded treason,
Taking its name from action, not from thought.
They, hidden in the darkness filled with dread,
Look out askance upon the moving throng,

Through grewsome shadows for a glimpse of
Him,
Myself lagging, following behind, apace,
Hoping for something now not like to be.
I see Him aye, uncovered with stooped shoulders,
'Mong moving points of light from shifting
lamps
Stabbing the pitying night, and with bowed
head,
Hands crossed and bound behind, pushed, jos-
tled on,
Plodding weary and faint the trampled way
Along the western slope of Olivet,
And still I follow, follow, in a trance.

" And so we move along, and from the hill
Approaching from the east the great walled city,
Across the vale of Kedron, we now see
The city's inner lights waver and veer
As if to warn away the lights with us.
And as we walk, from very weariness
The vulgar and vindictive become silent;
Something of dread and awe enshrouds the rest.
Only commands from the stentorian tribune,
Borrowed from Pilate to lend dignity
To this rank outrage in the name of Law,
Break the dull, measured tread of many feet
Beating the sodden dust now moist with dew.

" Afar come the fierce yelp of prowling foxes
And the weird wailings of the craven jackals,
As, angered and frightened at the moving lights,
They shrink back into darkness. To the hill
O'erlooking the black valley, as we near,
Faint sounds come wafted from the sleeping city —
Barkings of many dogs, followed by howlings
Prolonged and weird, the which on ending break
Into deep violent barkings once again.
Never before in life have I been moved
So indescribably as by what I see
And grewsome awfulness of what I hear.

(Before Annas.)

" Reaching at length the massive eastern gate,
It now is open so that all may enter
Of that mad marching throng, and now 'tis closed.
But ere it shuts, out of the dusk comes Peter.
(And not far from him enters also John),
A look of fright and horror on his face,
And he glides silently apast the rest,
Seeking again the cover of the shadows
And disappears. Then as they all file by,
The Master still encompassed in their midst,
Straight to the High-Priest's house and audience chamber

Hard by the Temple, on the upper floor,
They are directed all, and all assemble,
Little and great, staid elders and chief priests,
That have gone forth this night with their hired minions
To make sure of His capture by the throng —
(Save that the Roman squad has been relieved)
Captains, rude bailiffs, and the mindless idlers
That have been added to them on the way —
Gathered about the High-Priest, deposed Annas
(High-Priest in fact, but longer not in name)
Who sits there ready in his judgment seat,
And round about him sit these counselors,
All members by office of the great Sanhedrin.
And after consultation 'mong themselves
And whisperings back and forth 'twixt them and Annas,
These needless members now take distant seats
And Annas calls for quiet to the throng;
And as he does so, rising from his chair,
A Temple watchman from a nearby tower
Calls in a ringing voice:
'Hear all! 'Tis midnight!'
'Twas second hour's full stroke of middle watch.

" At this abrupt announcement of the hour
Pallor o'erspreads the wrinkled cheeks of Annas
And scales the furrows of his lofty brow;

So, for a moment, doth he seem unmanned,
As if impressed by this mad, lawless haste,
This haste at this unseemly hour of night,
In fear, dreading the daylight and the people
And dreading more the Master's slumbering
power
(O, let it show itself to their confusion)
And knowing well the fatal baselessness
Of the loose accusations set on foot
Against the bounden Prophet there before him,
Without the semblance of a written charge
Or fixed indictment of a known offense,
Without a precedent in all the Torah
Or housed in memory of any man,
To turn to in attempt to justify
Under the circumstance and time and fact.
The arch conspirator, acting as Court,
With a returning flush controls himself,
Gathers his priestly skirt about his knees,
Resumes his seat, and in a moment thus:
'Thou under duress, state Thy parentage!'
To which the Master in low, even voice
Citeth His parentage after the flesh,
At which the exultant priest, now gathering
courage
From the respectful bearing of the accused
And hoped-for inconsistence of his answer
With that which the inquisitor had in mind,

Questions him further:
'Let us hear from Thee
Briefly the facts in Thy young life's career.'
To which the Master speaks of His own birth
As it was widely known to common speech
Among the people at the time of it,
And of the Star i' the East, the Wise Men's visit,
Herod the Great's decree, the flight to Egypt
And the return soon after Herod's passing,
The converse with the Doctors in the Temple,
His youthful service as a carpenter,
And other things of import varying
To the beginning of His ministry;
Then halted there. All this was aptly told
By reference rather than by formal speech,
By deep allusion hinted for review
From out the past. And the white-bearded Annas
Shifteth uneasily upon his seat,
Doubtless remembering well the leading facts
So simply summoned, and able to vouch for them:
For at the outset, under the first Herod
Had he held place of power about his court
And was made High-Priest by the sole procurement
Of his successor under Roman rule

Some years thereafter, and knew Herod the Great
To have had fear about some infant King
(Whom Wise Men from the East had come to worship,
Guided at night by a new luminous star)
That rumor said was born unto the Jews:
And how he thought the Babe had been cut off
In the foul murder of the Innocents
Herod decreed to compass His destruction;
That Herod now was dead and He alive —
This quiet Prophet, this still uncrowned King,
Who seemed to seek in nowise secular rule,
But had been hailed by some as the Messiah,
And had assumed as much when ridding the Temple
Of money-changers, and had so assumed
Authority beyond his priestly self,
Naming the Temple as His Father's House,
Usurping, as he claimed, prerogatives
Belonging to himself and him alone,
And his proud Sadducean soul had chafed
In burning anger at these same assumptions
Of the Young Master, and though deeply moved
By the calm answers given, so even now
His anger doubled, but his fear increased,
And these in turn, portrayed upon his face —

These cross emotions raging in his heart —
The last, belike, in halting hesitancy
Prompting this question forced upon his lips,
Coupled with epithet of deadly insult,
Hoping, yet fearing, as to me it seems,
What the response might be:
'Bound blasphemer,
What is Thy claim beyond Thy parentage
Concerning Thy extraction, Gentile or Jew?'
To which the Master (my own blood boiling
At the gross slander):
'Admitting I am bound
Thou dost permit it.'
Proceeding further
He makes known simply, in unruffled tones
His genealogy from Abraham
To David, and from him again to Joseph,
In one unbroken line, without a flaw,
And being led on, he mentions Holy Writ,
Quoting the Prophet-Priest Isaiah,
And the forerunning of the Baptist John.

"During this colloquy, pallor again
O'erspread the features of the aged Annas
And he was plainly troubled and perplexed,
Yet full of anger and aggression still.
He questioned Jesus further of His doctrine,

With half a query as to His disciples,
To which the Master answered:
'I spake openly
Unto the world. I ever taught i' the synagogue
And in the Temple, whither aye the Jews
Do congregate; in secret I said nothing.
Why asketh thou of Me? Ask of them which heard Me
What I did say.'
While listening to this,
My heart, pulsing my breast with mighty throbs,
Leaps to my throat; my opened lips amove,
Frame burning words, run mad for utterance,
Raging betwixt my teeth at my tongue's end,
Ready to leap into articulate speech,
For I was a disciple, there to answer —
By the High-Priest's consent and knowledge, there
By his procurement. I had heard the Master
A thousand times and well might testify.
I knew the truth, which was consuming me,
Here was the Master's plea that I might speak,
Poor traitor that I am, I shall be called
To witness more readily on that account,
And surely now my soul shall free itself,
Speaking for Him the eternal verities,
Happen to me what may; I reck it not.

"But while these thoughts flash burning
through my mind
Like the forked lightning in a cloudy sky,
A minion of the High-Priest, having Him
Bounden in charge, with his profaning hand
Smites angrily the Master's sacred cheek —
The cheek where I had placed the traitor kiss,
The cheek that ere this pitiful hellish night,
Each, love, or fear, or reverence, or all,
Has guarded well from disrespectful touch.
And as a wild rage sweeps across my soul,
I spring unheeding at the miscreant,
Thinking to clutch my fingers on his throat,
But I am caught and held by the attendants
(None knowing my purpose,— or misjudging
it)
As a disturber of the inquiry,
Though without censure from the High-
Priest's self.
This dastard blow had fallen unrebuked
And without reprimand, with no remark,
Protest or frown, or sign of disapproval
From crier or scribe there in authority.
Then the offender speaks the Master thus:
'Answerest thou the reverent High-Priest so?'
To which the Christ:
'If I have spoken evil,
Bear witness of the evil, but if well

Why smitest thou Me?'
This evokes no answer,
Neither is other query put by Annas
To Him who seems so patiently awaiting
What is their will, showing small interest.
But Annas seems at loss how to proceed
And yet unwilling still to make an end,
But sits there all irresolute, the sweat
Standing in drops upon his pallid brow,
His tremulous fingers toying nervously
Among the soft folds of his priestly robes,
While I, emboldened by one devouring purpose,
Press forward to his view, but all in vain —
He calls me not, or any other witness.

" Then Annas rousing himself slowly announces:
' Accused, I find Thee from Thy uttered words
Without a witness speaking aught against Thee,
Fixed in Thy purpose to deceive the people
And evidently to deceive Thyself,
Submissive in demeanor, yet arrogant
In Thy insistence on Thy lofty claims,
The which run squarely counter to the Law.
If it be said there is no proof of this,
Yet hast Thou spoken of Thy open teachings;
Not in the least renouncing them, or any
Of Thy so rumored acts of wondrous healing,
Taken with time and place of doing them,

And their apparent purpose. What they were,
The manner of their doing, and the time,
Thy words, Thy deeds, and blasphemous assumptions,
Myself have seen and heard, in part, at least,
And so am well advised to notice them.
That these strange doctrines and activities
Tend to unsettle the well-fixed beliefs
Founded on laws as given us by Moses,
And these elaborated by the priesthood
From earliest times unto the present date
And written by our scholars in the Books,
Or firmly fixed in many memories,
I cannot question. I am not here to try
Or to denounce Thee, bounden Nazarene,
Nor to pass judgment on Thy many crimes,
But merely to measure Thy performances
As hast Thyself seen fit to speak of them.
I pass Thee, therefore, held and bounden still,
Before our High-Priest, the great Caiaphas,
Whose privilege it is, and whose stern duty
To hear Thee further, and belike call witness
Ere Thou be taken 'fore the great Sanhedrin
Upon the way to the Procurator
In whom rests life and death under great Cæsar.'

" During the specious reasoning of Annas,
Denunciatory and assuming guilt,

Whilst the cold utterer, conscious of wrong,
Claimed in his words that he did not denounce,
And while admitting lack of proper proof,
Spake of his own past knowledge as such proof
Of things he named that were in no wise charged —
A thing unheard-of in the Jewish Law —
The Master spoke not and seemed scarcely conscious
Till it drew to a close, then with a smile
Which seemed to say: 'Pardon him, O my Father,
And let Thy wish and will be My sure guide,
For surely knows he not that which he doeth.'
So He is led out of Priest Annas' hall
Across the court to that of Caiaphas,
Followed by all the assembled priests and elders,
The officers attending and the rabble,
And I among the others also follow,
For Annas had said that witness might be called
In the new hearing before Caiaphas;
So I may still be called and yet be heard."

STAGE II

BEFORE CAIAPHAS

NOW Caiaphas was High-Priest, not by Law
Nor regular descent, as fixed by Moses
Even from the Idumean interloper's puppet,
The Alexandrian Annas, but was kin
Unto the latter by affinity,
The latter holding the High-Priestly office
As it was farmed out to him first, and on
For seven years by Rome's procurators.
But, living still, though not of Aaron's stock,
The leading Jews deemed him High-Priest *de jure*,
Ignoring so his deposition by
Valerius Gratus, a past Roman legate;
But Caiaphas, by dint of Roman power
And latest preference, was such *de facto*.
With the mute understanding of them both
Annas was prime adviser in authority,
And hence to patch this double jurisdiction
By yielding up the apparent single doubt,
And so weld both in one, as well as strengthen
Each in itself, and mollify the people
And fuse the interests of the bickering cults
While placating the factions politic,
Romans, Asmoneans, and Herodians,

These crafty Sadducees and scheming elders,
With all the chief priests' subtle wiles approving
(Also the Pharisees, hating them all
But hating most of all the Great Accused,
And so made sullen, silent and inactive),
Procured the Master to be taken first
Before this Annas, as it has been said,
And gaining so the weight of his displeasure,
Spoken to catch approval of his friends,
Won their support, disclaiming the same time
The right to pass in judgment on His cause,
A right the which inhered in Caiaphas,
(With a committee of the great Sanhedrin);
So, yielding jurisdiction to the latter
(Beyond a mere informal inquiry)
While drowning jealousy between the two,
Tickled both Rome and Jewry with the straw
Of their shrewd subterfuge, and sent the Christ
Prejudged before this haughty Sadducee
Who had declared, as counselor of the Jews,
It was expedient that One should die —
Die for the people.
Of this unjust judge
And this second trial let the traitor tell:

" Leaving priest Annas' court, a portico
Broad and mosaic-floored, its roof upheld
On carved entablature, and this supported

By a long tier of fluted marble columns
Embased and capitaled, and fenced between
With granite railing from the nearby quarries,
Faces an open court the house encloses,
And this, brown-tiled and worn with passing feet,
On the same level with the bottom floor,
Lies shadowy below.
This upper porch
(Matched by a grander on the outer side)
Its every detail searing my hot brain,
Receives the human tide Annas has loosed,
And as it flows into the cooler air
Spreads out from wall to rail and surges on,
Beating against the center back and forth.

" Leading this center is the temple captain,
Bearing aloft the emblem of the Law
On a beribboned rod gilded and polished,
And after him the officer in charge,
Flanked by a double tier of deputies,
Urging in their midst the Master, weary limbed.

" Now turning sharply at the earliest angle,
This is repeated, and across the space
Above the open court, direct across
From Annas' audience chamber we have left
The temple captain opes a brazen gate,

And as I reach the entrance, lo, behold,
On a broad dais in the judgment chamber
In the far center, seated, cold and haughty
Upon his judgment chair, and spread before
him
On carven table, scrolls of papyrus
And palimpsests of written law, I see
(While scribes are many upon either side,
And these flanked by the Elders and chief
priests
And other members of the great Sanhedrin),
The new inquisitor, fierce Caiaphas,
Before whom, standing bowed and guarded yet
By the rude bailiff that had smitten Him,
The Holy One is mute and patient still:
A sight to heat one's blood, this Caiaphas,
Backed by the makeup of the Sanhedrin,—
At this unseemly hour and circumstance,
In this most barbarous and unlawful haste —
To bring the Master soon before themselves,
O'erwhelmingly against Him.
Still I hope,
And order being called by the Court-Crier,
Many of these who are Sanhedrists —
Priests, Elders, Sadducees, and zealous
Scribes,—
Seek witness in the throng to swear against
Him —

False witness thus suborned to perjury —
And these being questioned to a certain point
Suggested by some scribe, seem plausible
To undiscerning ears, in their quick answer
Suggested by the question (no questioner
Entering the lists to speak for the Accused);
But others come speaking to the same point,
With duller ears and blunter faculties,
And that half deference which Conscience pays
(Smothered though it may be in calumnies)
To open Truth, seeking its outward semblance,
And so involve themselves and those before them
In such confusion and perplexities
As often Falsehood for her votaries
Holdeth in store.
And so it comes about
That these conspirers to subvert the Law
Bare naked to the bone the infamy
Of their assault on Justice, and so doing,
Even the deriders are themselves derided
By the unthinking and mercurial mob
Which can not be restrained in its wild outbursts.

"Then Anger, roused, throws caution to the dogs,
Till one suborned comes with uplifted hand,
Saying, 'This fellow said'— referring to the Christ —

'"I'm able to destroy this temple of God
And build it in three days,"' then turns to go.
Then one having authority ('twas Nicodemus)
Says to the scribe who did the questioning,
'Ask of Him if He did not say it thus:
"Destroy this temple" (where ye both then were)
"And I again will raise it in three days?"'
At this a scowl like to a passing cloud
O'er a blue sky darkens their eager brows
And sets the jaws of the Sanhedrinists.
But Nicodemus being one of them,
With right to ask, the Scribe the question puts,
An' th' witness, careless of fact, but swift to please,
Presuming now the plain truth will suffice,
Before a fitting protest can be framed,
At once admits such is the truth,
While Caiaphas looks ill-pleased and pallid-cheeked.

"Another witness, called in desperation,
Being inquired of upon the same point,
And coupling so the other with himself
And seeking so to justify himself,
Stateth the matter timidly and thus:
'We heard Him say, "*I will* destroy this Temple

That is made with hands, and within three days
I'll build another one made without hands.'' '
At first none speaks to this, and being counter
To either view of what the other claimed,
And restoration to succeed destruction
Within so short a time, no harm could fall,
As was quite clear within the proof itself
Under the purview of the threat implied,
Even had the perjured witness spoken truth.
Beside, if either witness speaks the truth
The other surely is a falsifier,
And these fierce sticklers for formality
Have so produced both witnesses themselves
And cannot claim that either speaketh false,
This proof of its own weight falls and is naught.

" Still Nicodemus, anxious for the truth,
Ventures another searching query thus:
' Were there not threats at that time to destroy
Him? '
To which the witness answers, ' So I think.'
' Was 't then the Prisoner spake what thou hast
said? '
To which the witness thus: ' Belike 'tis so.'
Then Nicodemus further questions thus:
' When he spake of " this temple " as thou
say'st,
Referred He not to His own body there —

The temple of His life — His tabernacle
Earthly, named in the Word?' To which:
'I know not surely; ask of one who knows.'
And many jeer at this, but some are silent,
Yet soon the jeering dies, though unrebuked.

"Now when they seek for witness in the throng,
I think and hope I surely shall be called,
And so state loudly that I'll tell the truth
In all things touching what I know of Him,
His life and teaching, works and ministry,
Thinking my traitorous act will win their trust
And give me chance to ease my troubled soul
And set Truth's words against my acts of treason.
But still they call me not and ask me nothing.
But when this dead lull falls for a short space
With the flat failure of the proof suborned,
Hope springs once more that now my time has come
From their else lack of wherewith to proceed.

"But Caiaphas, livid with pent-up rage,
Rises from his seat, and to the Master thus:
'Sayest thou nothing? What is it which these
Witness against Thee?'
But still the unbroken silence
(His eyes seeming to search the Invisible)

That He had kept through all this second act
In mockery of the Law, He still maintains,
Scarce noting in His awful weariness
And vast absorption and profoundest thought,
What was transpiring in His actual presence,
Being numbed with sorrow. Then Caiaphas
strong
In the vain pride of his hot self-importance,
Abandons the bald pretext of this query,
And waving violent arms, unlawfully
Propounds unto the prisoner direct
Another, previously not touched upon,
Speaking in seething passion to Him thus:
'I do adjure Thee by the Living God
That Thou do tell us whether Thou art Christ,
The Son of God.'
And Jesus answering
(Ready at all times to uphold the truth,
AND MORE THAN EVER IN THIS TIME OF PERIL
To acquaint the world with His Messiahship),
Speaks calmly, simply saying,
'Thou hast said.
Nevertheless I say and unto you,
Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man
Sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming
In the clouds of Heaven.'
Then Caiaphas,

The High-Priest, in his sorrow of fierce zeal
Doth rend his priestly vestments, speaking thus:
'He hath spoken blasphemy! What further need
Have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye
Have heard His blasphemy from His own lips,
What think ye?' And they answer bitterly,
These callous priests, these heartless Sanhedrists,
'He worthy is of death,' and this is said
'Mid a tumultuous clamor.
Now they smite
Again, and buffet, yea, and spit on Him,
Mocking with clamorous insult that Great Soul
Of Love and Kindness, come to save the World.
And O my heart grows sick! Yet not the end,
For now the whole Sanhedrin must assemble
To pass upon — annul or yet affirm —
The findings of the Court of Caiaphas.
So Hope's dull spark a sickly glow takes on,
Fanned by the feeble breath of stricken Justice.

"And now? And now to the High Jewish Court
Whose members had been listening to the things
Called hearings before Annas, before Caiaphas —
These midnight orgies of distorted fear

And hellish hatred and mad prejudice
And greedy jealousy and all bad passions,
Holding their open court in the shut night,
Insulting form of Law and sense of order
Unto the Law's deep, everlasting shame,—
But now Sanhedrin, and its Hall of Judgment.

" And so the brazen gates whence Caiaphas
Had watched the living flood surround his seat,
Are opened outward and the angry ebb,
Shouting and mocking, finds its way from thence
(All sense of good or semblance of restraint
Gone from amongst them, sure and utterly),
Still following the Master, bound and held,
And now led down a further exit stair
Into the open court, thence to pass out
To the new Forum of the great Sanhedrin.
The order of their going is the same
(Barring disorder that is past description)
As that when issuing from the hall of Annas.
I gain a footing, mute and horrified,
Nearer the throng that eddies round the Master
As He is urged and thrust and led along.

" Now the chill morning air, I know not why,
Doth seem to smite the marrow of my bones
As we pass by an open-sided porch

With broad arched doorways looking out on us.
From 'yond the arches, servants, watchmen, porters
Cluster about an open brazier burning
Light fuel to dispel the morning chill,
While a stout Jewish maid, with arms akimbo
And broad hands resting on her hips,—a portress
With keen eyes set and sharp, sententious voice,
Speaks to one standing there to this effect:
'This man is also one of His disciples.'
Then in a voice that stirred my startled senses
Like a stone falling in a placid pool,
The answer comes, 'I am not.' Then another:
'Did I not see thee in the garden with Him?'
Then comes the answer, linked with many oaths
In hot denial.

O poor Simon Peter!
I pity thee for thy weak cowardice,
And thy bald falsehood, and low blasphemy;
I pity thee as none will pity me,
For the accursèd role that I have played
Was not from fear, but hoping good might come.
(But who goes courting wrong with the intent
That in some manner good may come of it,
Hath fallen squarely in the pit of evil.)
But Peter hath scarce spoken when a cock

Within the temple precincts and hard by,
Flapping exultant wings, crows loud and clear,
Greeting the graying east with ecstasy
In clarion tones that everyone may hear.
And Jesus, passing at the time an arch,
Doth witness Peter in his mad denial,
And His head droops, the silken-bearded chin
Sinks on His breast, 'bove that Great Heart of Pity,
To hear himself denied by one He loves.
And Peter, startled by the cock's loud call,
Looks up and sees the Master passing by,
With face bent towards him, tottering weak and troubled
'Neath such a load as mortal never bare;
And their eyes meet, and Peter seems o'ercome,
Then flees into the night, sobbing and weeping
In self-reproach and mental agony.
Still, do I truly envy him his grief,
For lo, the Master's gaze had rested on him
With only love and pity in those eyes,
Searching and wonderful, and no rebuke
Was on His tongue, but only silence — silence
More eloquent than a whole world of words,
Silence that said, 'I know the flesh is weak,'
Silence that pleaded, 'Peter, do My work,'
Silence that stamped on that weak, trembling heart

His Message, to the World to be delivered,
Silence that said, 'Farewell! I come again.
Be not discouraged, for I know thy grief,'
'Twas such as time might cure, with sacrifice,
And scalding tears might serve to wash away.
But mine — my grief, is of such gloomy depth
That but one thing can ever lighten it.

"When Peter, self-abased by his denial
And self-convicted of its heinousness,
Rushes forth in tears bewailing his offense,
Those having the World's Light in custody
Deride Him further, saying, 'Heard'st Thou
that hind,
That boorish fisherman, Thy dear disciple,
Denying Thee, his Prophet, with rude oaths?
The mongering Galilean, with the odor
Of his ill-smelling craft still clinging to him,
Is yet ashamed of Thee, and so doth weep
Because 'tis said he kept Thee company.'
Then the low wretches jeer and scoff again,
And laugh, and spit upon Him as He passes.
And those cold treacherous priests and Sad-
ducees
Join in the shameless mirth with fiendish relish,
Till one, emboldened still above the rest,
Casts o'er His head and face a woolen garment,
Thus to blindfold Him, and they smite Him so

Upon His face, His brow, His cheeks, and say:
'Now prophesy to us who is 't that smote
Thee?'
And once again the round of ribald mirth
Peels through the throng all horrible and hoarse,
Like devils' laughter bubbling up from hell."

STAGE III

BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

'TWAS not yet day when the deriding ceased
On that black afternight when Caiaphas
And his adherents in the inquiry,
Sitting in judgment on the Prince of Peace,
Made their base finding recommending death,
Summoned Sanhedrin and dismissed the throng.
But as Sanhedrin might not sit till Sun
Thrust his red rim above the horizon,
The guard-house just beyond the High-Priest's palace
Must so receive the Master's suffering body
To 'wait the sitting of the One-and-Seventy.
Yet even this short time brought not surcease
Of ache of jaded soul and wearied limb,
Already plagued by taunts and nameless insults,
Already put to blows and spat upon;
But even here the brutal armèd guards
Kept sleep at half-arm by their drowsy gibes,
And rest on thistles with their mockeries.
Yet through it all He uttered no complaint,
Nor His tormenters blamed as enemies,
But in His pain and weakness prayed for them
As part of those His sufferings were to save.

As the Sun's coming brought the new-born day
Ushered in rosy filaments of dawn
Upon the eastern margin of the world,
The sentry from the temple tower proclaimed
The new arrival in Time's endless host.
The guard relieved, transferred their prisoner
To their relievers, and now roughly, these,
Striking their spear butts on the sounding floor,
Ordered the Master to His feet again.
Sore in His flesh, and stiffened in His joints,
Haggard from murdered sleep, bowed with the bulk
And burden of the whole world's crushing sins,
He struggled upright, using His bound hands
Now to the fore to aid the pain-numbed thews
Of loins and nether limbs to lift their load,
Clutching a stapled ring driven in the wall
To which He had been chained; and so assumed
Semblance of one who seeks to stand erect.

Chill was the air, and this had driven off
The rabble to their homes to seek small rest
In soothing sleep and quieting composure,
After the mad excitement of the night.
These and their betters now were filing back
In pairs and singly to the scene of torment,

Talking in whispered tones of what might follow.

Rigid and silent 'gainst the prison wall
Which held the Master, a gaunt figure leaned
As though his ears would rob the listening stones
Of what might reach them from their inner sides,
Fencing the Son of Man. Black was his hair,
And coal black were his eyes, restless and wild,
Burning like twin stars in else empty sky
Beneath a cloud of brow, narrow but high;
The mouth was wide, lips thin and set and firm,
Betokening a spirit hot and rash,
Being aroused. A curling mustachio
Blackened the upper lip, and cheeks and chin
Bore the scant beardage of a land of sun,
Tufting the sallow skin; over the mouth,
Like the black eagle's beak, the forceful nose
Stood out to dominate the tendencies
Of an ambitious, though not evil nature,
But one that suddenly might grasp a purpose
With desperate resolve, unwittingly,
Not thinking deeply of the right or wrong
In its inception, looking to the end,
Counting results only, as he would have them,

But lacking judgment in his premises,
And power to square his conscience with the
right
In his swift, vigorous action.
This was Judas.
Sleep had not visited his deep-set eyes,
Nor peace his soul, nor rest his rugged body,
Nor calm the tempest of his tortured mind,
Since first he set his horrid enterprise
Nimbly afoot, coached by the Sadducees,
The Priests and Elders, and their high abettors,
Dreaming of fame to come unto himself,
And glory, some way, to his sinless Master,
And triumph to His Kingdom and His Cause,
As he had understood them; and not least,
Uplifting him, the twelfth, above the eleven
In power and preference which they all sought,
With jealous 'vantage, following the world.
But now he had no body, had no eyes,
No limbs, no anything that indicated pain
Or torturing discomforts of the flesh,
For his whole being centered in his soul;
His mind, his spirit,— all one ghastly whirl
Of conscious torment, unavailing sorrow,
And spiritual darkness shrouding him,
With but one thread of hope for anchorage,
And this seemed parting.
Still he clung to it —

A spider-strand in the Sanhedrin web.
He set the mighty tragedy afoot;
He hath portrayed it in its swift unfolding;
Let him continue:

"Now it is day once more,
Though it hath seemed that day would never come
To earth again, and night would bide forever;
Yet it is day. The brazen door swings in,
A trumpet sounds, and from the prison's depths
Once more the Master comes into the light
Which He makes lighter with His moving smile,
Ineffably sweet, though deeply sorrowful,
As, bounden still and guarded as before,
He steps off painfully through the open square
Toward that famous chamber of the Temple —
The Hall of Judgment.
As He passes on,
The crowd assembles, intermixes, follows,
Without restraint or order, in the open;
Yet no deriding, no denouncing speech
Chafes the sweet morning air, for the Sanhedrin
Has now assembled in its mighty hall —
The Hall of the Cut Stones, famed for its splendor —
To sit in council, and its president,
The High-Priest Caiaphas, can still direct,

But not control, the action of the whole,
The judgment of the One-and-Seventy.

"What if the major part should not affirm
The hasty action of the night committee?
The thought of this keeps the rude throng in silence.
What if the agèd Annas should renounce
The unspoken sentence that his acts implied,
And his great influence, though but chief priest here,
Turn in the accustomed channels of the Law?
What if some champion in the open court,
Fearless for Right, and eloquent for Justice,
Should rise up from his seat and point the way
Through Pentateuch and Torah to acquittal —
A way plain to a dullard, such as I?
The thought of these things keeps my hope alive,
Sick though it be, and famished nigh to death.

"But I move, following Him. The easy steps,
Fifteen in number, of white alabaster,
Up which the guard's rude strength assisteth Him,
Have scarce been raised, when I am on the first
And following Him, as oft I've been before.

But O, how different, for now He sees me not,
And knows not of me, or if yea, to blame?
The thought consumes my breath, but still I
follow.

"O'er the broad pillared porch, spread from
the steps,
Is He conducted to the marbled floor
Done in mosaic, through the central portal
Leading to the vast hall, and from its threshold,
My glance, sweeping from right to left,
Measures the scene, fixes the distances,
And stamps the sharp details upon my mind,
Shewing far back, three tiers of armèd seats
In a half circle spread upon the floor.
Flanking like key-stone to a mighty arch
(A quarter circle upon either side)
A central platform for the President,
Bears up his gilded seat, with, on each side,
A simpler seat, merely a place of honor
(Mark of distinction, not authority,
Above the other members in the wings)
For any whom the High-Priest might invite,
While a low table spreads before the three.

"Upon the gilded chair, the President
Caiaphas sits, and at his right, aged Annas
(And my heart sinks to see it, and my hope),

While at the left the honor seat is vacant.
Still, that half circle holds Gamaliel,
Learned Doctor of the Law, and counselor
Pre-eminent in learning and in wisdom,
Grandson of Hillel famous in the past,
Noted for honesty and love of Justice,
Famed for deep insight and abundant mercy,
So overtopping all in great attainments.
Yet is the left-hand seat of honor vacant
And my soul quails to see him thus ignored,
As boding evil to the cause of Justice.
But there he sits, kindly and open-faced,
In the right wing, and my eyes range to others;
The triple tier of faces wear a frown,
Betokening hostile thoughts and fixed conclusions.
Relieved, my glance at point of the left wing
Rests first on one I know, and then another,
Whom I have often seen in the years gone,
And each looks kindly, but exceeding troubled —
'Tis Nicodemus, and his good friend Joseph
Of Arimathea.

" A half score scribes
Sit at the tables near to each wing's point,
Ready to make notations in the case,
Quill over ear, and papyrus before them.

Betwixt the tables goes the Master up
Still bound, and hurried by two officers,
And stands before the gilded central seat
For trial now before the great Sanhedrin;
And Caiaphas, arising, speaks and thus:
'Learned counselors and elders, priests and scribes,
Members in each degree of this tribunal,
Great in the past and glorious in the present,
And zealous always for the cause of God,
Under the Law, and mindful of the Prophets:
Ye are convoked to sit in open session
Of our Sanhedrin at this time and place
To pass upon the findings 'gainst this Man,
Of your committee, under my direction,
In recent session at our priestly palace.
This Man ye oft have seen, and all well know,
Jesus of Nazareth, a son of Joseph,
Himself a carpenter, as was his father,
Stands bound before you, under heavy judgment
With penalty of death, both for review.'

"'Ye know the Man, and know of His assumptions;
Have felt the insult of His spoken scorn;
Seen exhibitions of his so-called healing,
With claim and pretense that it is from God;

Know of His demonstrations in the Temple,
Bespeaking it, forsooth, His Father's house;
Lashing the money-changers from its courts,
Although they served, and well, a public need;
And stating too, about the swift destruction
Of this stupendous monument of God,
And its, by Him, miraculous rebuilding
Within three days.
The most of you were present
At our late inquiry, and heard witnesses
Speak on these points, and know their evidence,
Which as you know was waived on the accused
Stating in open court before all present
That He is Son of the Almighty God.
This is rank blasphemy, and self-avowed,
And as ye all then present are aware,
On this He was adjudged, all other charges
That might be brought within the evidence
Being abandoned, and the hearing closed
With the death sentence, subject to review,
By this most august council and full court.[1]
Jesus of Nazareth, make known to us
What sayest Thou against this entered sentence.'

"Through all this heavy monologue of fact
Assumed to be, and premises declared,
The Master listens, listens as not hearing

Its empty words and sounding sentences,
And even its demand and closing query
He answers not, but closed and silent still
The pallid lips, the level, thrilling voice
That I have heard so oft in the sweet fields
And blooming valleys of dear Galilee,
And on its mountain slopes, and its bright lake.

" Then some within the court call mockingly,
'If Thou 'rt the Christ then tell us,' but He sayeth,
'If I should tell you, ye would not believe,
And if I question you, ye will not answer,'
Then lapses He to silence as before.
Then Caiaphas, losing temper, 'quires again,
'Answerest nothing still?' And still but silence.
Then Caiaphas, in most insulting tones:
'Art Son of God to-day?' and Christ:
'I am,
To-day and all days,
And as said before.'
Then Caiaphas, discomfited, his taunt
Thrust back into his throat by that calm voice,
In passionate outburst of vehement rage:
'Ye hear again? What need for further proofs?
He doth reiterate His blasphemy

Before the whole Sanhedrin. Now what say ye?'

" The rim of the half-circle throbs in tumult,
But ere it calms, so a true vote can be,
The grave Gamaliel, rising from his seat,
White-haired and venerable, thrusts a thin hand
Towards his colleagues and addresses them:
' Brethren, be calm, and think before you vote
On this momentous matter now before you.
Some knowledge of the Law, and precedents
Writ in the scrolls by those who've gone before,
And all of it retained in memory,
Doth make me pause much in the instant case.
If ye affirm, ye give this Man to death,
If Rome sees fit to honor your decree.
But what if not? Or even what if yea?
In the first instance is your labor mocked,
And in the other,— stop and think of it!

" ' If it should ever prove that you were wrong,
The fact that no appeal from the Sanhedrin
Lies for the Accused, but only your cold prayer
For execution to the Governor,
That Rome inflict our ordered butchery,
Would not, if we have souls, assuage our grief
Or wash the odium of this day's work
Clean from the records of this ancient court.

Last night a large committee of yourselves
Adjudged this Man to death. To death for what?
What was the basis of this swift procedure
The which our president hath just disclosed
Opened an inquiry on many points,
Loosely promulgated without charge or order,
And finally fixed on bald blasphemy
(Not before mentioned), by a direct question
Of our great president, and so propounded
Without an offering by the Accused
Of the same matter in his own behalf,
With justifying plea, or otherwise?
Have we within the Torah precedent
By written finding, script, or otherwise,
Lodged in the memory of any here,
Whereby to justify this, or affirm?
It may be yea, but I have never seen it.

"'Further, my brethren, and I must be plain
(Though by the record now, it is not vital,
Our chief hath mentioned it), witnesses were called
To speak of certain things to your committee
Touching the speech and conduct of th' Accused.
Some of our number, and I blush to say it,
Left their judicial seats of inquiry

And through the throng sought these same witnesses
To come before themselves, who were to judge Him,
And testify against the Prisoner.
I will not say these witnesses were asked
To state things thus and so. Enough it is
To know their words brought shame and blame to us,
To every man who sat, an acting judge
In that proceeding. Let me ask: Since when
Might any member of the grave Sanhedrin
Act pander to the council where he sits
In search for witnesses to come before it,
And so before himself, sitting in judgment?
Last night, from midnight till the sky grew gray,
Standing in bonds, upon His feet all night,
As I do learn, even as now He stands,
This Prisoner with none to speak for Him
Was subject to a double inquiry,
In an unusual place, as I believe,
At an unusual time, as I suggest.
Will any give me light upon these matters?

" ' Brethren, this hour is big with consequence;
I feel it so, I cannot tell you why.
Grant that this Man hath treated us with scorn,

Hath trampled under foot observances,
Hallowed to us and to our ancestors,
Hath powers assumed and great prerogatives
Which ill comport with our authority
Granted to us from the remotest past
By God and Moses, His unfailing Prophet,
And so doth rouse our animosities —
Shall we let our own hatred blind our Justice
And send to death one who displeases us,
Because of our displeasure, and by methods
So out of joint with those prevailing here?
Think of it, brethren, ere it be too late!

"'If this Man here be only an impostor,
And such is proven, then some punishment
Should in due course be visited upon Him.
Hath proof been made on any fixèd charge
Whereof our law takes rightful cognizance,
Fixing the penalty of death for it? —
A penalty this court may not enforce
But needs must call the mighty power of Rome
On her crossed gibbet, so to expiate
The venom of our hatred 'gainst this Man.

"'Rome is a pagan power. Now what to Rome
Portends your finding here for blasphemy
Against our God, even should ye affirm it?

Will Rome consent to be our hired butcher
Without a question of this Man's offense,
If Rome be just? I surely cannot think it.
Further, this Man, as we do all well know,
Hath a great following among the people;
His life is spotless, and His power great,
Healing the sick, feeding great hungry throngs
Miraculously who come to hear His doctrine
Spoken with power and great persuasiveness,
And illustrated by sweet, simple truths
That hedge about the lot and lives of men.
These are a few strands in the silken cord
With which He binds the common people to Him.
His sect will thrive on that with which ye feed it;
If this be persecution, then beware!
Deprive this Man of life; thousands will rise
(His friends, and all who loathe pure persecution)
In every land to carry on His work,
And will brave bonds and sword and fire to do it;
While if ye pay no heed to Him at all,
His creed must perish by its own dead weight
If so 'tis built on error and on wrong,
And Jewry triumph, as it ought to do.

"'I am reminded as I speak to you,
Resting my gaze upon this Man, the Accused,
That years ago, when I was a young man,
A lad came straying softly through the Temple
And took a seat before the learned doctors
Versed in the Law and Spiritual Doctrine.
He was not forward, nor was He abashed,
But looked into the faces of all present
With such sweet winning trust, such confidence
In Self, and faith in all about Him there,
That all were drawn to Him unwittingly.
Then He began at once to question us
(For I was one of them) with such keen insight,
Such depths of knowledge, such maturèd wisdom,
That we were all astonished and confused,
For the child seemed, if measured by His years,
But little past the age of half-a-score,
Yet did His queries test the venerables,
Speaking foreknowledge that breathed prophecy.
And when at length a man and woman came
Claiming His parentage, and chiding Him
For lack of thought in lingering so behind
While they had started for their distant home
(It being shortly by the Passover),
We felt relieved of our embarrassment,

But were again perplexed by His strange answer,
Ignoring them; 'twas:
"Wist ye not that I
Must be about My Father's business?"
Yet He went with them, and we exchanged glances
As they departed, and were dumb with wonder.

"'One sitteth here that will remember this,
Beside myself — our learnèd brother Annas,
And we two only of the whole survive,
That were among the doctors gathered there.
It only goes to this: As my soul liveth,
I do believe that lad is now before us
In this strange Man of Majesty and Power,
Clothed in humility and fearing naught,
Save that the Truth may someway be obscured.
Is this Man then of God, or is He not?
When was another like Him in the world?
Yet are we looking all for a Messiah.
I've said my say, my brethren; think of it.
If all this be of God, what opposition
We heap upon it will return to us
To plague us fitly to our own undoing.'

"While this plain putting of the naked truth
Troubles the hearts of many here in judgment,

As is apparent from the blanchèd faces,
Others seem prone to anger, some to doubt;
And my poor hope doth rise, though sorely stricken,
That surely most will stand on Mercy's side,
And on the side of Right and Law and Honor.
For one of them had said unto the others
Long ere this horrid carnival of wrong
(These words are ever slipping from my lips):
'If He hath broke the law, then why not try Him
Under the law as ye would any other?'
And, fool, I thought that they would surely do so
And saw in it triumphant vindication,
And power, and honor, and increasing glory.
But while I muse, communing idly thus,
Robed Annas, rising up at Caiaphas' side,
Full of deep insight and experience,
Hoary with age and seeming dignity,
But with the shade of insincerity
Clouding his wrinkled brow, proceeds, and thus:

"'Nasi, and brethren of this august council,
I rise not merely to make argument
To justify the things which have been done.
Let the occasion justify the facts

That have grown from it. Our learned brother here
(And we feel proud that he is one of us)
To whose vast research and ability
None will pay greater tribute than myself,
Talks much of Law and much of precedent,
And I shall not endeavor to dispute
His stated lack of both to authorize
In some particulars what hath been done,
And what is pending in this instant case;
That is not to the point.
In all the Law
Or all the rulings of this august Body
Where is there mention of a cause like this?
Where is there instance of a mortal man
Born of a woman, brought up by His parents
In a mean village at a craftman's trade,
The which He left not until recently,
Still young in years, uncultured by the schools,
Bursting at once in priestly arrogance —
Priest above high-priest by His own assumption —
Into the sacred precincts of the Temple,
A stranger in our midst, dictating doctrine
To those the twice His age reared in its shadow,
And speaking ownership in His Father's name,
Thereby assuming what He now confesseth?

" ' All this is known, and none of it denied
Of this Man standing here a prisoner.
Is it then wonder that no precedent
Or any law covers the present case?
Hath any one beside in all the years
Claimed to be Son of the Almighty God
And in the teeth, too, of the whole Sanhedrin,
Upon the High-Priest's query?
And if not,
Why talk of precedent for cause like this?
As well seek precedents of courts for dreams,
And law to govern feverish fantasies.
Meantime our polity, our God-born faith,
Our whole religious teachings, offices,
God-given, our emoluments, authority,
Having a thousand years for their foundation,
Might crumble into dust, or pass like mist
While we were searching tomes for precedents.
'Tis not a case for such. There is one Law
That standeth over all but God Himself,
And justifieth who appeal to it —
The law of one's self-saving, self-defense.
This Man must die or we ourselves must perish,
Perish in power, and cease in consequence,
Be held contemptible, and set at naught
By the great masses that have followed Him,
Daily increasing, else shall our faith

Be undermined, and our homes beggared.
It cannot be endured and must not be.

" ' Our brother here hath spoken of a lad
Coming into the Temple long ago,
Winning, yet strange, and shewing certain depth
Of understanding far beyond His years.
I do remember it. My brother thinks
That promising lad is now the assuming Man
Posing before us as the Son of God.
Such things do come and go; they are as dreams —
Nature's extravagance spent in the blood
That feedeth infants in the mother's womb,
And often on their entry to the world
With the advancement of their ripening years
Meanly steals back that thus so richly given,
Till life matures in mental poverty;
As those born rich oft dwindle in estate
And come at last into a pauper's grave.
As to the prodigy our brother cites,
Had He not passed or elsewise been obscured
[This priest knows better deep in his own heart],
Had we not heard from Him in twenty years
Ere this Man made sedition in our midst?
Imagination surely hath disturbed

Our brother's judgment in the present case,
But will imagination build us up
When all we are, and have, is laid in ruin
By this Man's machinations 'mong the people?
I will not more. 'Tis vain to speak so much.
I but repeat: This Man should surely die!'

"As this harangue advanced and gathered force,
Arousing anger, founding it on fear,
Appealing unto every Sanhedrist
Through the approach to his self-interest,
And finally advising, right or wrong,
On the bare basis of expedience,
Adjudgment of the Master unto death,
Inviting bond of murder preconceived
Among these judges semicircled here,
The set, fierce look that I had noticed first
Steals o'er the features of the most of them,
And shuddering horror seems to compass me,
As he sinks, angry, yet in seeming fear
Of Him whom first he sought so to belittle,
Faint to his armèd, waiting seat again.

"Then to my own astonishment and hope,
Stands Nicodemus, a wise man and just,
Rich, and of much influence, aiding many,
Quiet, and level-tongued, offending none,

Backward for one of his estate and knowledge
And consequent broad contact with the world,
But with great force of keen, inquiring wit,
Of marvelous discernment, soul of honor,
Living embodiment of active mercy,
Further withal, a friend unto the Master,
A lover of His Doctrines and His Love,
A silent admirer, by no means a feeble
Upon occasion, as before I knew.
And now as he arises, a faint flush
Mounting his ruddy cheeks and a strange light
Burning in his black eyes, he seems transfigured
Into a very pyramid of strength
With apex in the blue, as he proceedeth:

" ' President, and brethren all, do pardon me.
I feel oppressed by what I just have heard.
I mean to none ill-will in saying so,
I hope that none will bear ill-will to me
For any utterance which I may make,
For oh, my heart is full, and had I words
To fit my feelings and a voice to reach
The open ears of all your consciences,
Then might I hope ye all would fully heed me
And bring not misery, bring not hastiness,
Bring not raped Justice, wringing bloody hands
With cries of wrong, to stand about your beds,
Breaking your slumbers into horrid dreams

Until yourselves leap screaming from your
couches
And flee in darkness, fearing your own voices,
By the affirmance of this thing decreed
By your committee.
Let us squarely look
At some things that have just been said to us!
'Tis said the Prisoner is low and mean,
With little schooling, growth of a mean village,
Young, and a stranger. Are these things, then,
crimes?
No, surely there 's no punishment for these.
'Tis stated further that this ill-bred Man,
So young and ignorant, is yet so forceful
And so persuasive that the list'ning masses
Do follow Him, and so abandon us.
If this be true, then have we cause to blush,
Unless some mighty power upholdeth Him;
If this be so, then who but God upholdeth?
Is His whole life not warrant against evil,
Which He denounceth, preaching righteous-
ness?
And wish ye as a Court to slay Him for it?
The one most *learnèd* of our entire number
Hath said there is no law, no precedent
To affirm the thing we are considering;
The one most *ancient* readily admits it.
They are agreed on this. The last implies

"We must *make law*, to cover it, and *now*,
And *now* enforce it," so enact and judicate
In the one sitting, which he, in effect,
Doth seem to advocate before you here.
One trembles at the thought; for one of you
Might compass any lawful thing this day
And in the ev'ning be dragged from your bed
Upon another's charge and frightened clamor,
This Body meet at once, and if persuaded,
Pronounce the thing a crime, the criminal
So made to hand, convict him quietly
By a committee, as was 'complished here,
Assemble the Sanhedrin at the daybreak,
Affirm committee's work and so approve it;
Then drag you off for Rome to nail you fast
Upon a cross-barred post ere you had missed
A single meal with your own family.
What think you of the freedom of a Jew,
As this Man is, if things like this may be?

"'On a new view to shew some other things:
Our Annas, whom ye all do venerate,
Speaks of a higher law, self-preservation,
Self-defense. Now hath this Prisoner,
This Prophet of the People, Sent of God
(As they maintain and with much show of truth),
Ever been known to seek another's life?

('Tis stated truly that He hath saved hundreds,
And still persists in conserving life).
No, but forsooth He certainly should die
Because He hath belittled some of us,
Robbed us of homage, and attacked our creed,
Reduced our profits by His ultra teachings;
And more to the same purpose.
And if true
And but by preaching what He claimed as true
Might a man murdering, to escape annoyance
Such as is claimèd here, being taken for it,
Then plead, as for assault made on his life,
And say, "My slaughter was in self-defense?"
It is ignoble to insult your reason
By anything like this, in its true light.
Here ye are asked to kill, and justify
(Of course I speak of you judicially)
With no more cause than in the case supposed.
But what hath this to do with blasphemy,
Of which the Prisoner was adjudged guilty?
(And so acquitted of all other charges.)
Yea, and 'tis said on *His own* evidence,
And an affirmance prayed for now and here.
Before us then this Prisoner so questioned
Reiterates that He's the Son of God.
Is there another witness on the point?
I have not heard one, and there was none other!

"'Now if the Court itself call, for itself,
A prisoner to be witness 'fore the Court,
And do in nowise contradict the witness
By any other, and he, called, doth show
That he is guiltless, will ye punish him,
Defeat your cause by your own evidence,
And yet pronounce for guilt in spite of it?

"'As is well known, this Man hath called to life
Many from death; amongst them Lazarus.
Yourselves had witness there who vouch for this.
This power comes but from God, as also doth
Much else — shown in the many miracles
Which He hath wrought, healing afflicted people,
And feeding folk by thousands with a morsel,
With the food's increase after all had eaten.
Will ye sneer that the devils work for Him?
He stands untarnished in His purity —
Doth Good consort with Evil, Evil with Good,
To do a righteous and praiseworthy thing?
Or devils — do they good themselves, unaided?
Further, it hath been promised unto us
For near two thousand years, and we have waited
And prayed, and looked, and longed, and wept for it,
First in the Bondage on the banks of Nile

Chanting out deep despair to mighty Pithom
As we did toil and sweat to build her up,
Mere beasts of burden to our enemies
Who beat and scourged us to our daily tasks,
Till Moses came to help us flee from them;
Still we do most esteem *him* our sole prophet:
Then for a thousand years to Solomon —
Even David's son, first builder of God's Temple —
Waiting a Greater, a Messiah, sent
Direct from God to lead and govern us.
We listened to the Prophets prophesy,
And for they chided us because we sneered,
We sometimes seized and slew them in our rage,
Rousing the wrath of the Great God thereby,
And so were punished and the Temple stript
Of costly service and bejeweled costumes
And given to destruction, and our people,
Children and aged, driv'n like sheep to pasture
By human wolves for dogs, Chaldean spears
For shepherd's staffs to prod us on the way
To where we should be herded in due time
Like pagan asses on their lonely wastes.

" ' So hath Euphrates heard our sorrowing
And Tigris the complaining of our voices,
Till Heathen Justice, stronger than our Faith,
Did give us back our city and ourselves —

The temple wares, robbed this time from the
robber,
And tendered back to whom they first belonged,
Means, and a builder, e'en Zerubbabel,
To rear again this sacred House of God,
Partly destroyed and then rebuilded fully
After five hundred years by the Great Herod,
Who planned to finish it and garnish it
With a magnificence before not reached,
And it hath been accomplished in the main,
But it is charged (and is it without basis?)
That we have built our pride and our injustice,
Our sanctimonious observances,
And our own willfulness to full completion,
Ignoring the true spirit of the Law
And all the warnings of the mighty prophets.

"'Here fell great Zechariah in the past,
Long, long ago, stoned in the Temple court
For that he dared to beard an empty king
For his idolatrous and lustful life,
And shout God's truth in warning to his people,
And here were slaughtered many a prophet
since,
And some not slaughtered here came here at
last,
Laden with insult and their lives gone out —

Borne here by secret friends for their last sleep.
Truly our city is the tomb of prophets
Whom we have given but a burial place,
And grudgingly, for all they sought to aid us.
And then the desert prophet, mighty John!
Yea, that majestic head and peerless body
Sundered apart, his followers brought together,
And secretly within the sacred soil
Of this, God's City, which he loved so well
(For here God vowed to make him what he was)
Laid him to sleep to waken but in Glory.
I know not this, as neither know it ye.
But I believe it well, and can ye doubt it?
God careth for His own, and he is God's.
'Twas John foretold the coming of the One
Ye here debate of seeking for His blood.
This is a Man of Mystery and Might,
Beyond our comprehension, without doubt.
If it be true as to His rumored speech;
"Ere Abraham was, I am"— if this be so,
He comes to us from out the Ultimate Past,
Being in part embodiment of God's spirit,
And so of God Himself, and so Forever,
Past, Present, and To Be, and One with God.
Shall all the dreadful errors of the past
Bring us no wisdom, justice, truth, or mercy,
Or deep repentance seeking for amends?

I do adjure you, brethren, stain your hands
Not with the blood of this last Greatest Prophet,
The One who on my soul it seems we've prayed for,
The Promised One of God, the true Messiah.
O brethren, have a care now for yourselves
And for this people, hapless Israel.
Bring not another judgment on our heads!
Rouse not again the wrath of God against us
So if we live 'twill be even as Cain lived —
In fear of death, and with God's mark upon us.'

"These utterances of our Nicodemus,
So squarely put, so evidently just,
So in the light of law, unanswerable,
And doubly so as buttressed by the facts,
Borne on the current of His matchless voice,
Melting in pathos, hot with flaming scorn,
Kindle my courage and renew my hope
As I hang on the outcome of his lips,
Unable for the time to move my gaze;
But when he ceases, a swift-searching glance,
Sweeping the new-moon curve of upturned faces,
Leaves my soul weltering in perplexities.
A few there are whose faces show the light
Of truth and justice fairly glowing on them

And the warm red of seeming indignation
Flushing in protest 'gainst the wrong attempted,
But some are stolid with the gripe of fear,
Mingled with hatred and cupidity,
And others next to these seem to bespeak
An overflow of more ferocious passion,—
A senseless thirst for blood, a bitter yearning
Not to be sated but by cruel death,—
While others still seem centers of confusion
Which will not settle until silence comes.
Still have I hope of it.
And now young Annas,
Son of the aged Annas who had spoken,
A chief priest of some note and eminence,
Rises in fierce impatience from his seat
And straightway thus:
'Our president! And ye
My brothers, who are gathered here to-day,
Why are we here at all? This Man before us
Hath been adjudged to death by a committee,
Chosen as the law provides by this Sanhedrin.
Sanhedrin is convened to pass upon
What its committee found: 'twas blasphemy.
The punishment affixed to it is death.
The evidence, that of the Prisoner's self,
Was held by it sufficient and conclusive;
The evidence before *us* is the same —

The declaration of the Prisoner's Self
That He is Son of the Almighty God.
Will ye affirm, or not?
If this may be —
That man may call himself the Deity,
Or yet God's Son, which scarcely is the less,
And boast our Temple as *his* Father's House
And we have not wherewith to punish him,—
Then might we well God's service store away,
Destroy the Corban, hide the sacred vessels,
The lamps and fountains and the golden gifts,
And rent the Holy Temple for a khan,
Shelter for Gentiles and Idolaters,
And thus profane forever and for aye
God's Name and House, and all that both abide for.
Why do they talk of *law* and *precedent*,
Of *midnight doings*, and *unusual hours?*

"'Should we stand still and perish? When Pharaoh
O'ertook our fathers on the Red Sea strand,
Had Moses time to build a fleet of ships
To row them safely to the further shore,
All dry and orderly beyond the reach
Of those Egyptian charioteers and horsemen?
No! and because Moses could not save them,
God Himself saved them. We save *ourselves*,

But by the means which God hath given us
To meet a deadly peril as we may,
For our own preservation and His Glory.
Have we not heard enough of argument?
And what purporteth it? And what avails
To listen to a role of platitudes —
Fit in their place, applied unto conditions
Such as may rise in ordinary routine?
These have no standing here. Away with them!
And let us meet the issue now at hand
As 't should be met, in an heroic spirit,
Taking the chance, biding the consequence,
Daring to save ourselves and institutions
From threatened overthrow. I move a vote
At once and for affirmance.'

" List'ning to this
Fierce cloud-burst torrent of unreasoning speech,
Builded on fear and brazen selfishness,
With hollow pretense still of loyalty
To God and His great stately House, the Temple,
That these hot sectaries might, searching, find
Something to cling to in their self-deception,
I am appalled at its affrontery
And seeming carelessness of consequence,
Plainly ignoring every claim of right,

Of justice, and of deathless verity.
And when the speaker calls for instant action
My soul grows deathly sick with apprehension,
For he has talked to those who wish t' affirm
And only seek excuse for such affirmance.
But ere 'tis seconded, upon his feet
Is Arimathean Joseph, claiming then
His privilege as member of the Council,
And he proceedeth thus:

'Our president,
My brethren of this we call Sanhedrin!
What is this Body that 's assembled here?
Ere this I had been taught, and we all claimed
That this High Jewish Court was Court of Justice.
I would persuade you that it is so still.
But now 'tis argued here by those of power
And learning, having here authority,
That, as applied unto the instant cause,
This is no court at all, but an assemblage
Of trembling cowards, void of sense or reason,
And held together with a bond of fear.
Now then this fear is groundless or 'tis just.
If it be groundless, then we make ourselves
And this High Court which we do represent
A laughing-stock, a thing to mock and scoff at,
Trailing our dignity through nameless mire
Of idle foolishness, to public scorn

Which needs must follow when the storm abates,
Of mad distemper which hath brought it on;
If it be just, then must it be because
The things which it is built upon are just
And founded on the will of the Almighty,
'Gainst which the gates of hell may not prevail.
So in the end your labor still is folly,—
Nay, worse than folly, 'tis presumptuous.

" ' 'Tis said this Prisoner hath caused this fear,
And also that He is a blasphemer
And doth deceive the people to their harm.
Yet do the people not complain, but *we*,
The people have accused him not, but *we*,
And yet ye say He's poor, and ignorant,
Of little consequence, and an impostor.
If so, why do ye fear Him? and if so,
Why do ye hate Him with such bitterness
As doth flame through the words which we have heard?
And if it be not so, why then, what then?
In either case it is admitted here
There is no warrant for what ye would do
In law or precedent, under the proof,
Even now when your whole claim is narrowed down
To the extorted charge of blasphemy,

Built on confession which the Court drew forth,
Shewing the fact of more than innocence,—
Fact not confuted, aye and probable,
From things outside this Prisoner's utterances,
Which ye are 'ware of in your inmost hearts;
And yet some say that we still should affirm
A judgment giving this Man unto death.

"'And now I ask again of all of you,
What is this Body that's assembed here?
Do we abandon here all reverence for,
And all traditions of, an honored past
This Court hath borne down through the centuries?
And overturn in one tumultuous ruin
A reputation built upon the ages,
A Court first fixed by King Jehoshaphat
On plan laid down by Moses long before,
And founded in the justice of our fathers
Time out of mind? Great God! can this thing be?
We have it laid down squarely in the Torah,
As 'tis construed in the unwritten Mishna
Grav'n on the memories of all of us,
We must presume a prisoner innocent
Until his guilt is fairly proved before us.
Then shall we blindly abrogate the Law?
Barter calm Justice for Expedience

At Passion's dictates in our holdings here
And so do murder by majority
Under the name Sanhedrin?'

"While he paused
As if awaiting answer unto this,
Livid with pent-up wrath doth Caiaphas
Leap to his feet, and calling to the speaker,
Demandeth:

'Dost thou here accuse this Court
Of being swayed by passion, bent on murder,
And cutting loose entirely from the Law,
To seek hot satisfaction in its name
For their own purposes and grievances
Against the Prisoner, and without proof?'
And Joseph thus:

'Nasi, with due respect,
I made no accusations whatsoever;
We have not done the ghastly thing as yet.
I do but question, "Shall we stoop to it?"
In doing this do I surpass my rights?'
Then Caiaphas:

'Thou surely hast no right
To doubt the motives of this august Court,
Assail the honesty, impugn the justice,
Or cast aspersions intimating bias
Before the door of any member of it.'
To which the Arimathean:

'This were true
Had there no member of the Court announced
This as a cause beyond the pale of law,
The Prisoner outside the bounds of justice,
The rule of judgment, but the heart's desire
Of any member here of the Sanhedrin
Who feels himself belittled or aggrieved —
Hurt in his purse or his prerogatives,
In fact or feared — for possibility.
Was e'er the like of this heard of before?'
Then Caiaphas, interrupting, stamps his foot,
Announcing fiercely:
'We'll no more of this!
Assume thy seat! We do but waste our time!'
And then addressing the assembled Court:
'Brethren, the Prisoner is here before you;
His accusation come from His own mouth;
Ye know the Man, the facts, the circumstances.
Proceed now to the ballot that was moved.
Ye know your duty.'

"The Arimathean
Had made so simply plain, so evident,
The rank injustice urged against the Master,
That hope revived in me the certain thought
That no man with a heart within his bosom
Could now, for blushing shame, pronounce
against Him.

But when fierce Caiaphas flatly interposing
With evident intent to crush the speaker
And so make known to all his own fixed bias,
Ordered the man of truth to take his seat,
'Tis doubly plain that he makes common cause
With Annas and his son, and holds their views
To be the true reflection of his own —
The pact of hatred, self, expedience.
Then as I see the faces hardening,
Grow tense within the semicircle here,
I feel that all is lost, is *lost*, LOST, LOST!
And now the vote is called and is recorded,
And but three only in the Master's favor,
The same who had thus spoken for Him there,
While all the others voted to affirm.
And so again the judgment: 'He is guilty,
Worthy of Death, and ordered before Pilate,
That he may execute the penalty
On the affirmed decree of blasphemy'
Is written and announced.

"Then a wild clamor
Demoniacal in its ferocity
Breaks in the hall from the assembled throng.
Some maddened wretch, forsooth, an officer,
Throws a strong cord about the Master's neck,
And with a deputy on either side
Starts from the hall to lead the Master off

To Pilate for His sentence to the Cross,
And 'mid fierce shouts and fearful execrations,
Drags Him away."

Now ere the hall is cleared,
And the Sanhedrists still are in their seats,
Gamaliel and Joseph gain their feet
To ask some entry or to make a protest,
When Judas, shouting in his agony,
Calls to them all, the One-and-Seventy:
"I must be heard, and will be, though ye slay me!
I have betrayed innocent blood — betrayed
Whom I did know was sinless as the angels!"
Then one as spokesman: "What is that to us?
See thou to that!" and Judas, shrieking out:
"What is 't to ye? Doth it concern ye not
When every doubt is moved, that ye will murder,
Insisting on it as a privilege?
Despite the proof, despite the law, the fact,
Nay, the clear knowledge, that ye lust for blood
Of Him your victim as some thirst for wine,
And now scarce seek a mean excuse for it?
Here is your cursèd bribe, your petty fee,
For shewing where ye might lay hands on Him.
And I did do as I had pledged to do,
But did ye not then say He should be tried

As doth the law provide, on charges made,
The which would be made good by witnesses?
I had no *fear*, e'en should it go so far,
For well I knew that He was innocent.
Ye had no *faith*, your motive was revenge,
Your whole proceedings here were mockeries.
So ye will apprehend and punish me
If I remain not silent? Do it! Do it!
Publish your perfidy to the whole world —
Jew, Gentile, Pagan, and Idolater —
Make of yourselves a loathing and a show —
A stench unto the nostrils of mankind.
Here are your thirty pieces! Thought ye then
To make me an assassin for this hire,
The fixèd value of a common slave?
Had I been lusting for unholy gain,
And that alone, then had I gauged the price
In some proportion to your hellish hatreds —
A sum the ransom of a Royal Prince,
And not this paltry pittance which ye weighed
Out of your sacred treasury to me.
This I accepted in my foolishness
Lest ye should fear the traitor but a spy,
And I delay His triumph at your cost.
Take it, aye take it! Still 'tis *yours*, 'tis *yours!*
Murder was far from me when I received it."

Thus having said, with a wide-swinging hand
He sowed the coins like seeds betwixt his fingers,
Jingling like laughing imps, before their feet
On the half-circled floor of patterned marble.
One cried out, "Touch it not! It is accurst.
We cannot to the Treasury return it,
The Law forbids, and conscience doth revolt.
For it is price of blood!" Then Judas thus:
"It is not so unless ye make it such!
The Master liveth still! His weary feet
Press the white steps descending from this Temple,
Or move toward death at the Prætorium
Even at this moment, going at your will,
A rope about His neck, led like a felon,
Your hatred's sacrifice, to Rome's crossed tree.
Ye bide here still! Reverse your red decree
While yet ye may, and ere it be too late!
Revoke it, or your memory and names
Shall be a hissing on the tongues of men
For ages heaped on ages yet to be,
Even when my black treason shall be bleached
In part, at least, by the white light of truth.

"Aye, sneer that I am mad,— beside myself.
Now ye exult, hoping no consequence
Bides in the method of your foul success,
Or in the falsehood and iniquity

On which you've sought to bottom it withal.
But, lo, the day will come to some of you,
And will in gloom arise upon your children,
And on your children's children after these,
And on this nation, in whose frenzied heart
Ye have but now planted the seeds of death,
When in the dust ye shall, and long shall they,
Deplore your persecution and mad folly,
Reap, oft injustly, sufferings and heartbreak,
Dire persecution and ignoble exile,
The certain harvest of your own injustice,
Imposed because He called you hypocrites
And held in scorn your man-made mummeries —
Your endless, subtle, cold formalities,
Spawned from your own false hearts to hide the Law
And make its sure neglect your boasted virtue,
Your certain profit, and chief ground of zeal.
And now, for that He, whom ye have condemned,
Did call ye to repentance, and made clear
Your plain misdeeds and deep hypocrisies,
Ye've sent Him to the Cross; the Son of God —
Ye gibe that He dares use the Name,
Yet Moses and the prophets, said they not
That all His people surely were God's children?
Ne'er, now, may Israel claim that parentage
Till Israel accept whom ye've condemned,

Bowed in the dust and ashes of repentance.
For did the Master not call out to you
In your defiance and stiff-necked perversion:
'Your house is left unto you desolate,
For now henceforth ye shall not see Me
Till ye shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh
In the Lord's name?"'
Ponder ye this and weep.
I leave you in your mutiny 'gainst that God
Whom in your shallow souls ye claim to serve.
Remember Judas, whom ye justly scorn,
And with more justice learn to scorn yourselves."

Then the Sanhedrists: "Let the traitor rave!
We waste our time!" and hurrying they joined
The raging throng which hedged about the Master
On the great bridge spanning Tyropean,
And in abasement added clearer tones
To the deriding that was crushing there,
With sorrow and spurned love, Christ's patient spirit,
While Judas, calling wildly out, "*Lost! lost!*
'Tis not to be! 'twill never, never be!"
Rushed through the maddened throng and disappeared.

Into a somber, desolated tract,
Burnt with a drouth that never was appeased,
Without the city gates, barren and broken
With splintered rocks and blasted, dying trees,
A riven field of gullies and brown thorns,
The guideless feet of Judas carried him,
Till, when the mighty wave of angry tumult
That swept him on had crumbled to black spray,
And left him stranded in the smitten field,
His passion gone, and horror and abasement
Stirring the lava ashes of his crime,
He found himself communing with himself:
"The world will say I did it out of greed;
None in the world will contradict the world.
What though the world well knows that of the Twelve
I was picked out to bear the common purse,
Their trust and knowledge of my faithfulness
My only bond,— a trust not once betrayed.
Others will claim He knew me from the first
To be a man of evil in all things.
What though 'tis true that I was of the Twelve
The Master chose to go forth in His stead,
Preaching His Word, and healing in His Name,
As I was pleased to do? 'Twill be forgotten,
And they will say and preach, He did condemn me,

Knowing He washed *my* feet on that last night.
(And can it be it was the night just passed,
The last that is to come for me, for Him?),
With His dear hands, while caught about His loins
He bore a towel looped to dry them with;
Mine, yea, and every other's of the Twelve,
To give a lesson in Humility
To each of us, and quench our love of *self*,
And curb the crude ambition of our hearts,—
Self-seeking all, to His own deadly peril,
Knowing as He well knew I should betray Him,
Peter deny Him with unseemly oaths,
And the rest flee from Him in abject terror
By reason of the perils I should bring.
Will He forgive them, all save only me?
Even when the armèd legionaries stood
Grouping anear Him, and my treason's kiss
Lodged on His sensitive cheek, He called me friend.
He doth not lie! He will remember me
In friendly spirit, as He called me friend.
Yea, I forget it not, speaking of me,
Yet speaking to me unmistakably
His words rebuked, His eyes compassionated:
'Woe to that man by whom I am betrayed.
Good were 't for him that he had not been born.'

" And surely this is true unto the world.
For what is my place now in all the world,
To which my name hath come or ever shall?
' Judas the traitor!' ' Judas the false friend,'
' Judas the trafficker in innocent blood,
And that the blood of his own Lord and Master,'
' Judas, the one sum total of all evils,
Living, embodied into human form,'
' Judas a ghastly gibbet made of bones
Crowned with a grinning skull, a thing to hang
The legendary garbage of all vice,
And all the meanness of the world upon,
That men can think, imagine, dream about.'
The name repeats itself, with emphasis;
'Tis Judas, *Judas*, JUDAS, through all time
A name that generations will abhor
Because 'twill be the fashion to abhor,
And the unthinking still assume much merit
By branding me an enemy of Christ;
A name none will apply to living thing
Except in detestation of that thing,
Or infamous comparison with me.
Oh, it is horrible, too dread to bear!
But He will lift my load, will pardon me.
The world will execrate, but He'll forgive.
" To-day He too will die. I shall be spared
This much at least, I shall not see Him die.

But His slow expiration on the Cross
Shall make that Pagan Curse a Christian
Symbol,
The Sign Triumphant of His life on Earth,
The Scepter of His Kingdom Spiritual,
For a high place in which upon the earth,
Wishing but good to Him, Ambition's snare
Did catch me firmly in its awful toils.
And this blight-smitten tree (forever more
It and its kind shall be the Judas tree,
Till God's own lightnings in the hands of man
Shall in swift mercy quiet such as I,
Only, adjudged by others than themselves)
Shall bear the first-fruits of this tragedy.
This bit from off the cord they led Him with
Unto the Pagan Pilate and to death
Shall be the stem to fix me to its branch,
And my hope's cable (As He is its Anchor),
But to be loosed by Death's releasing autumn,
And what was Judas rests on earth again.
Master, forgive! Farewell! Hope lives! Thou
knowest!"

STAGE IV

BEFORE PILATE

UNDER Tiberius, haughty, tyrannical,
Stern in his ease and cruel in his leisure,
But not without the sense of common justice
When not conflicting with self-interest,
Was Pilate, governor of all Judea,
And next to him under the Roman power
Was Herod Antipas, then for some time
Tetrarch of Galilee, murd'rer of John,
The Desert Prophet, and the Christ's forerunner.

Scarcely had Pilate taken up his office
When from his palace at Cæsarea,
The legionaries, part of his armed force,
At night, up-marching to the Holy City,
Bore with them on long staffs their legion's
emblems —
The silver eagles of the mighty empire.
The Jews were furious at the Procurator,
Deeming these eagles at Jerusalem
No better than the semblance of black vultures,
A profanation unto it and them.
And so for days and nights, near a full week,
They sieged his palace at Cæsarea,

Begging and threat'ning, moaning and entreating,
With bodies prostrate, cast upon the ground,
For the removal of the offending things,
Bird-shaped, the soldiers carried on their staffs;
And even threats to send the troops amongst them
To beat and stab them drove them not away.
So 'twas these hot fanatics did prevail
To have the eagles taken from their city.

But Pilate was incensed in part against them
By their persistence and fierce superstitions,
Yet saw there too-dread possibilities
For future trouble. Then again soon after,
Noting the dust that smote the populace,
And thinking to do a good and useful thing,
He built an aqueduct, bringing direct
Water from distant Pools of Solomon
Into the thirsty streets and dried-up fountains
Of this same Holy City. Thoughtlessly
(Some say in malice) to meet overcost,
He seized on funds then lying in the Corban,
The Sacred-Treasure given to the Temple.
So was the Jewish passion flamed to frenzy
At secular use of their so sacred fund.
They heaped resentment fierce on Pontius Pilate,
And he, stung by their insults and their gibes,

On their refusing to disperse at once,
Disguised his soldiers in the Jewish garb,
Sending out many in the multitude,
With clubs concealed and daggers, in their robes,
Who fell upon the rioting devotees,
Doing much murder so, half secretly,
Causing tumultuous terrors and alarms
Wherein were hundreds trampled in the dust,
And many dead were gathered from the streets.
Loud murmurings came of this, and bruitings
hourly
Of delegations to Tiberius
To bear complaints against the governor
To this imperious Cæsar at far Rome.

So deepened the distrust, so grew the hatred,
Springing like fungus growth betwixt the
governed
And their distraught, tormented governor,
When Pilate, thinking to seal his loyalty
Safe from the busy tongues of Hate and Envy,
In the great palace at Jerusalem
(Built by red-handed Herod, called the Great,
Made Court by Pilate at the festivals)
Hung on its walls some richly gilded shields
Well dedicated to Tiberius
(For his own purpose and the Cæsar's honor),
Harmless and inoffensive in themselves

And never meant to breed antipathies;
But the Jews heard of them and so were wild
With kindling rage, and shouted sacrilege.
Pilate at his wit's end refused to move them,
Thinking it safer to defy all Jewry
Than by a chance offend the Emperor,
And this caused loud complaint and an appeal
Unto Tiberius himself by some great Jews;
And as the rugged Cæsar less than little
Cared for the puerile fripperies of courts,
He did reverse shrewd Pilate's loyal holding,
Ord'ring the shields back to Cæsarea
To deck the temple of the great Augustus,
With reprimand that he so chanced revolt.

These, and some further matters not then settled
'Twixt Galileans and Samaritans,
In which was Pilate charged with interference,
Not satisfactory to either side,
Discover some of the perplexities
Facing the office of procurator
And facing the Procurator himself —
Even Pontius Pilate,— who that morning lay
On his soft couch, yawning from sated sleep,
When roused by spear-butt knockings of the sentry
Calling the inner guard to wake their master.

Now Pilate in his chamber in the palace,
Fully awake, heard through the cross-barred lattice
From o'er the gullied vale Tyropean,
Faintly at first, but with increasing sound,
Such passionate cries and jeers, such mocking taunts,
Such fierce, incongruous tumult of mad voices
As sent a shudder through his Roman nerves
Beyond past tremors of experience.
And when informed he was to sit in judgment
On one condemned before the Court Sanhedrin,
He was annoyed, but slipping on his robes
And hastening to the Prætorium —
The judgment hall of the Herodian palace —
Found standing there the Christ, some officers,
And certain number of his low accusers,
But the great notables, the Sanhedrists,
Shouting vociferously, would yet not enter
The Gentile Hall lest they might be defiled
At the approaching of the Passover,
And so be thus unfitted to partake.
For them reluctantly did Pilate yield
His dignity to their keen prejudice,
And stepping to the fore went down to them
Into the open sunlight of the street.
And now let Nicodemus state what passed,

For he was silent grown, and sorrowful,
(His few attempted words drowned in the clamor)
Silent but vigilant and all observant.

" Coming from where the Master waited him,
And having spoken a few words with Him,
Pilate demanded of the Sanhedrists:
'What accusation bring ye 'gainst this Man?'
This was a Scythian arrow to the mark,
And angry pallor spread o'er many faces
At this suggestion of an inquiry
When they were but expecting execution
Of their own baseless, murderous decree.
'Think'st thou if He were not a malefactor
We had delivered up this Man to thee?'
They said evasively, and Pilate thus:
'Would ye have me to give this Man to death
Upon no charge to make an inquiry,—
Without inquiry to sustain a charge
Known only to yourselves? Am I a butcher?
Take ye this Man and judge Him by *your* law!'
Then Caiaphas:
'This Man hath been adjudged
Worthy of death by our Sanhedrin here,
Having authority, but Rome ordains
That the death fine shall not be visited
Save by the mandate of her governor,

Hence this appeal to thee, Most Excellent,
That this Man may be forfeit to the Cross,
Which is His sentence.'
Then spake Pilate thus:
'If so, I must repeat: Upon what charge?'
Then Caiaphas, recalling what Gamaliel
Had spoken to them when they sate in Council,
And the result of giving in the record
Entered for Blasphemy, touched not on that,
But led a storm of furious invective,
Joined in by notables and surging mob,
Charging that Jesus did pervert the nation,
Advised against just tribute unto Cæsar,
And did Himself assume to be a king.
Then the mad throng brake in vociferously
With shouts of 'Crucify Him! Crucify!'
Repeated oft with wild ferocity
Until the walled-in streets did echo it.

"To this, when the wild storm of shouting ceased
In measure, Pilate, flushing, said, annoyed,
'Ye make a triple charge. It seemeth strange
That I have heard not of this man's perversions,
Or known complaints, or falling off of tribute
Due unto Cæsar, laid at this Man's door
(Though ye do say He doth mislead the people),
Until this moment. Let this matter pass.

Doth any come to prove His claim of Kingship?
I hear none answer. I will question Him.'

"Withdrawing from before these passionate judges
And the vociferous rabble on the pave,
Pilate once more enters his Judgment Hall,
And noting the pale Prisoner standing there,
Patient and uncomplaining, bearing still
The awful tire of these long restless hours,
His heart was touched for Him who suffered so,
And so he asked Him thus, half pityingly:
'Art Thou King of the Jews?' to which the Christ:
'Say'st thou this of thyself, or did there others
Tell it thee of Me?'
To which Pilate, hotly:
'Am I a Jew, a *Jew?* 'Twas Thy own nation
And the chief priests delivered Thee to me!
What hast thou done?' To which the Savior:
'Know that My Kingdom is not of this world!
If so it were, then would My servants fight
That I should not be handed to the Jews;
But surely is My Kingdom not from hence.'
Then Pilate questioned:
'Art Thou then a King?'
And Jesus answering:
'Thou sayest: I am a King.

To this end was I born; and for this cause
Came I into the world, that I should bear
Witness unto the truth, and everyone
That 's of the truth heareth My voice.'
And Pilate,
Musing and moved, said (wondering) unto Him,
'What *is* truth?' but Jesus answered not,
Assuming there, belike, that all men know
The pith and purport of veracity
Within its simpler sense, but of its higher
Much speech might be required to make it clear,
And speech He knew would now be only idle,
And He was wearied 'most beyond endurance;
And Pilate mused and pondered, then arose
And stepping down again, announced to them,
His fierce accusers, on the open pave,
'I find in Him no fault, no fault at all!'

"After this full acquittal it is plain
The prisoner should forthwith have been set free,
And doubtless this was Pilate's first intent,
But scarcely he'd pronounced 'I find no fault,'
Than once again, a hissing, howling storm
Of fierce reproach and furious accusation
Breaks from the vociferous throng in bitter
shouts:
'He hath stirred up sedition through all Jewry,
Even from Galilee unto this place!'

And much more clamorous and unbridled speech,
All to the Master's deep disparagement,
Set forth in passionate speech, and terrible.

" Now Pilate, wishing to be just, yet feared;
The latent coward in his cruel nature
And possible results upon himself
Through the imperial mandates in far Rome
Looming in stern review upon his acts,
Be what they might, unmanned his better self,
And made him a poor weakling for the nonce,
So his quick wit bade him extemporize,
Seeking in doubtful course and full of danger
(Catching a clew from the throng's utterances)
To shift unwelcome burdens on another;
So Pilate, fleeing duty out of fear
And selfishness of an ignoble nature,
Tramped in the mire the opportunity
(Except to mark his lasting execration)
To make himself the greatest of Rome's great
In all her gilded script of history,
Past, present, or to-be; did only that
Which branded him pre-eminently weak,
Pre-eminently selfish and unjust,
Great from his loss of opportunity,
(All unavailed, to link his name with truth
And justice to the Immaculate Son of God,
Breathing still in the flesh, thrown in his power),

And still immortal in a bad degree,
For his weak, unavailing sympathy,
Wanting the saving strength of manly courage
And love of justice for sweet justice's sake.

" So Pilate thus:
'Where doth He bide, this Man
Whom ye accuse so hotly and so glibly?
Where is His home? Where have His teachings
been,
And His seditions most made manifest?'
And most said, 'Galilee,' but some said, 'Here,
Here in the city of Jerusalem.'
So that it doth appear there is some question,
And himself wishing to drop all further action,
Yet not too much offend these hot fanatics
Who diligently sought the Christ's destruction,
Proceeded thus:
'It doth appear to me,
As voiced by this assemblage gathered here,
This Prisoner's abode is Galilee,
His home is there, and His activities,
Of which complaint is made, were mostly there.
Herod, the Tetrarch of all Galilee,
Son of his famous father, the Great Herod,
Your one-time King, and builder of this palace,
Is here at present for the Passover
And hath taken lodgment in the Asmonæn palace

During his stay. His Tetrarchy hath come,
Carrying its rights of judgment, all direct
From Cæsar, so his jurisdiction quite
Doth cover the Accused and the offenses
Of which ye most complain. Now take ye Him
Straightway to Herod and let him adjudge.'

" So then the acquitted Christ, but not unbound,
Was dragged and urged through the now swel-
tering streets,
Through morning's blaze of sun and thirst of
sky,
Unto the court of Herod Antipas,
Many of His accusers, small and great,
Following like hungry hounds to bay Him down
With the wild howls of their untired deriding.
Yet He spake not, but step by step bore up
The heavy burden of His mortal frame,
Staggering along in wearied consciousness,
His lips amove at times as though in prayer
For strength, and for His ruthless enemies."

STAGE V

BEFORE HEROD

NOW Herod long had wished to see the Christ,
For he had heard of Him and His great teachings,
His miracles and wondrous healing power,
And heard Him mentioned by his victim, John,
(Whom not himself would willingly have slain,
But aping manners of a boastful despot
Had pledged himself to murder in advance,
Unconsciously still in the naked letter,
As fenced about by its including terms,
And held to it at instance of a woman
More guilty and as soulless as himself),
And so felt flattered by this act of Pilate
Touching the jurisdiction of himself
To try the Master on these rambling charges
Which the mad throng brought, shouting, to his ears,
And his heart warmed to Pilate for the friendship
Which he saw hidden, as he did believe,
In Pilate's act so barren of assumption
And full of courtesy unto himself;
That so he felt to waive his jurisdiction.

If such he had, would be a compliment
To the Procurator, now called his friend.
And then he thought he saw, as had seen Pilate,
The groundlessness of their preferred indictments
(And this before he'd questioned Christ at all),
Builded on wrath and urged in sleepless hatred,
And having no after qualms as Pilate had
Of any secondary consequence,
Felt him disposed to look at the affair
As a wild outbreak of the passionate Jews,
A Temple-madness, broken into fury
On the occasion of the Passover,
Which would consume itself of its own heat,
And so an end of it; but he'd question Him
Ere he decided fully.

Before this man,
Weaker than Pilate and less scrupulous,
Did the Sanhedrists and their followers
Again arraign the Master and accuse Him
Of many things, which they hoped might involve Him,
There in the Hall of the Asmonæn palace,
And shouted out, " He makes Himself a King
And doth mislead the people to their hurt."
So Herod sate in judgment on the Christ,
Ensanguined Guilt on Sacred Innocence,

Darkness on Light, Falsehood on Living Truth,
And mortal man on Immortality.

Now as He stood there, bowed and mute before
him,
Herod did ask the Christ of many things,—
Of His beliefs, His doctrines, His disciples,
His works of wonder and benevolence,
His boundless love, and mastery of Death,
Of His commingling of the sunset dyes
And the rich flavor of the blood of grapes
And the strange alchemy of God's sweet air
With water prisoned in rude earthen jars,
And at His wish and will transmuting all,
The water, only, being visibly present,
Into the wedding wine, and all for Love.
And then as if Christ were a mountebank
Did Herod intimate a strong desire
To see some miracle with his own eyes,
As if his wish were of first consequence,
And so his puppet power and petty place
Were wage and motive for the Son of God.
But through it all the Master paid no heed,
Nor spake a single word in recognition.
So Herod was enraged, yet could not find
Matter to base one charge preferred upon,
And so discovered, as had also Pilate,
That 'twas but envy of the Sanhedrists

That fed the flame for Christ's fierce persecution,
And he acquitted Him yet not discharged Him,
Even as the shifty Pilate so had done;
But thinking to abase Him in the eyes
Of his own courtiers and rude soldiery,
And mollify the passion of the Jews,
And feed his anger at the Christ's contempt,
Ordered his troops to make a show of Him.

Then Herod and his men of war at naught
Did set the Master, and made sport of Him,
Tauntingly mocked Him, and in gorgeous robes
Clothed Him, and from a near-by greening hedge
Plaited a wreath of spiny pointed thorns
And placed it on His head for a mock crown,
Shouting derisively in loud acclaim
The coronation fact of the new King
As they moved slowly through the sweltering streets,
Back unto Pilate, with mock exaltation,
Crying, "Behold the triumph of the Christ,
The Temple Builder of Jerusalem,
The dreaming King of the benighted Jews,
Who with His mighty host of crippled beggars,
Captained by fishermen from Galilee,
Marched with their crutches needed but for arms,—

Marched on in confidence to take the town,—
Led by this Monarch mounted on an ass,
To batter down the mighty walls of Zion,
Beguile the people, terrify the priesthood,
And overturn all system and all rule
'Stablished by Moses from the early days.
Hear Him and bow before Him while ye may!"
With other wordy form of mockery,
And these all followed by derisive shouts
And laughter that might shame the Evil One,
As they move back to Pilate and his court.

If these deridings pleased the Herod escort
And made a pageant for the shallow few
Who took no active part on either side,
They surely not appeased these fierce Sanhedrists
Who saw in them some slur upon themselves,—
A making light of their own urgent qualms,—
The Tetrarch's labeled sneer at their concern
About the doings of a rural dreamer
Unseasoned of the world, and ignorant
Of the wise learning gotten at the schools,
And the complexion of the ways of life,
(A coming back of what themselves had urged),
Of whom themselves quaked in vast apprehension,
Like children walking in a twilight wood.

So their resentment now, partly inspired
By the position thus assumed by Herod,
Brake out in many and incongruous shouts,
Mingling with the Herodian ribaldry
And thoughtless jest and boorish pleasantry
Their cries of "Crucify Him! Crucify!"
For well they knew Him wisest of the wise,
Had seen His power, and at His command
Of matchless logic turned against themselves
Silenced and angered oft had slunk away.
But now, as once before, the Bounden One
Amid the noisy throng, reached the paved court
Fronting the hall of the Prætorium,
And 'bove the sounds of mirth and mockery
Came the persistent horror, "Crucify!"

STAGE VI

AGAIN BEFORE PILATE

NOW was the Son of Man, the Greatest Prophet,
The Savior of the World, the True Messiah,
Once more arraigned before the Roman judge,
The weak, corrupt dispenser of Rome's justice?
Nay, but still would have been but for his weakness
And lack of courage bred of selfishness.
Himself had once acquitted this same Christ,
Declaring thus: "I find no fault in Him."
Himself being the higher court so acting,
Had shortly afterwards therein declared,
From inquiries made and findings thereupon,
That the true jurisdiction of Christ's cause
Lay with Antipas; and this Herod had
Assumed that jurisdiction, and sent back,
After examination and inquiry,
The Master bearing back His own acquittal,
Published in scoffs and puerile mockeries.
Yet now the Acquitted One is here again,
So Pilate's plain and simple duty was
Then and at once to set the Prisoner free.
But Pilate feared when these wild passionate shouts,

Pleading for blood, rang in his ears again;
So mingling policy with his contempt
For these unscrupulous sticklers for revenge,
Had his carved throne brought from the hall
and placed
Before the great Prætorium, and there
On a raised dais in the paven space,
First sending for not-present Sanhedrists,
'Gan to extemporize with them, and thus:

"Men of Judea and Jerusalem!
What will ye more? Whom ye accused but now
Before me, as a breeder of sedition
And claiming kingship in this goodly province,
I did examine, as well privately
As in my invitation of your proofs
Which ye were barren of, and so did find Him
Guiltless of any wrong ye charged Him with.
Further, to satisfy your noisy clamors,
It being mentioned here by some of you
That this Man lived and taught in Galilee,
Where chiefly He was active in His claims
And in His teachings and His leadership,
I sent Him unto Herod, who, now here,
Might make inquiry of His local doings
There in the Tetrarchy of Galilee,
His certain forum, under these same charges;
He hath acquitted Him and sent Him back

To bide our further action. Now what say
ye?"

Before the throng had gathered up its thoughts,
Broken to whisperings among themselves
By this plain statement of the premises,
Which in all justice was the end of it,
A youthful page, a pretty Roman boy
With golden curls and merry, dancing eyes,
Stepped lightly to the throne and bowing low,
Then straight'ning up his graceful, supple
figure,
Handed to Pilate a white papyrus
With gilded edge and traced with characters
Which Pilate, blanching, did decipher thus:
"My Lord Pilatus:
Greeting and good will!
Hearing report this morning before sun
That His own people had laid hands on Him
Who is called Jesus, Him of Nazareth,
And that they seek His life by law, through thee
To carry out their sentence to the Cross,
I wish to tell thee that I saw this Man
Once in the street proceeding to the Temple,
And heard Him make some utterance to the
people,
And never have by either look or speech
Seen one that so profoundly did impress me.

" Last night I dreamed of Him, after the midnight
(And I do seldom dream at any time);
I saw Him in my vision scourged and bleeding,
A crown of thorns plaited about His brow,
And every thorn seemed like a tiny dagger
Stabbing His tender flesh, which did respond
By small red rills coursing down His pale face,
While maddened men vociferously cried,
'Crucify! Crucify! He is condemned to death!'

" Ere this I'd heard the vagabond, homeless dogs
Baying the moon, so long, so pitifully,
That I rose from my couch, and through the lattice
Looked out upon the city in its sleep,
And wondering what did trouble these poor brutes,
I let my gaze play truant far and near.
Out o'er the shadowy slopes of Olivet
I also heard the jackals bark and snarl
As though disturbed in their night wanderings,
And saw strange, twinkling lights mix with the moonshine,
Shuttling about in it, and this way moving
Till they were shut out by the city wall.
Lifting my gaze well up toward the zenith

Of the blue concave of the eastern heavens,
I noted a white star, flashing and brilliant,
And while I looked upon it, it dulled out
So that it seemed to me to fade away,
Leaving but naked sky where it had been,
And I was startled, till it flashed again
From nothing to full radiance in the blue.
Then on returning to my couch again,
Came the dreamed horrors I have written of.
And now the story of Calpurnia
Pleading with the great Julius for his safety
Is heavy on me, and I fear for Him,
This Nazarene. Have nothing thou to do
With that just Man, except to free Him only,
For I have suffered, suffered many things
This day from this same dream, because of Him.
So pardon me! Oh, let them not on thee
Fix the red stain of His most innocent blood!
So also earn my lasting gratitude.
Thy wife and lover,
Claudia Procula."

Now Pilate being troubled, wishing to do
Substantial justice to the Prisoner,
Yet vastly fearful of the consequence
Of rousing the resentment of the throng
Against himself, vouched this concession,
Thinking to that extent to appease their wrath,

Waiving insistence on the prisoner's rights
In their full letter, spake to the throng, and thus:
"I will therefore chastise Him and release Him."
(For of necessity he must release
On this recurrence of the Passover
One under sentence and awaiting death).
Then the keen priests and zealots in the throng,
Knowing the custom, and discovering
Weak Pilate's purpose in thus tying up
His own prerogatives with their 'stablished rights,
Induced the throng to call for the release
Of one Bar-Abbas, then condemned to death
For murder in sedition, on the Cross.
And so the throng cried out in fiendish chorus,
"Away with this man, and release to us
Bar-Abbas."
Pilate, however, willing
To free the Master, spake again to them
To that same purport, but they cried out, saying,
"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"
And then
With weak insistence, and for the third time —
Himself on trial now in his own court,
Begging for justice of a mob tribunal:

"Why now, what evil hath He done? I've found
In Him no cause for death! I will chastise Him,
Therefore, and let Him go." But they cried out
The more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"
And Pilate fearing, and prevailing naught,
But rather feeding more the rising tumult,
Called for a crock of water, and before them —
The priests and elders and the multitude —
With nervous fingers washed his outstretched hands,
Saying in witness as he faced them all:
"I am innocent of the blood of this
Most righteous Man, and now see ye to it!"
And they, persistent still, called out to him:
"His blood be on us and upon our children!"
Then he released to them the man Bar-Abbas,
But Christ he ordered scourged — scourged and condemned;
But still reserved one more expedient.

Then the imprisoned murderer, released,
Came forward to them there, brought from his cell.
Rugged and firm of jaw, of upright frame,
Betokening giant strength, full bearded,
With deep-set, midnight eyes, seeming afire

With lofty scorn and deep impenitence,
And glowering under overhanging brows
Shaggy and grim, and as he there so came,
Hung from his loins he wore a leathern kilt,
A fox's skin hung o'er his massive shoulders
Fastened with sharp thorn skewer at the throat.
Only the crisp, curled hair, brown and abundant,
Covered his head, and on the sinewy feet
Stout leathern sandals firmly laced in place,
Completed his apparel. And so met
The criminal, released to liberty,
And the Messiah, thus consigned to death,
Still in another's stead to bleed and suffer.
And for a moment only, their eyes meet
There on the throngèd pave, the One in pity,
In love, in resignation. Both are silent.
The hardened lines slip from the murderer's face,
The look of scorn melts from both eye and lip,
And then the bearded lips are tremulous,
Stirred with some deep emotion and remembrance,
And he essays to speak — the pardoned one —
To the Condemned, but though the strong lips move
There is no sound, and so Bar-Abbas,
The great tears hiding in the bearded cheeks,

The murderer ransomed by the Christ condemned,
Strides off to freedom, leaving but his name:
"Son of the Father"— self of every man.

And Jesus? He was bound and publicly
And cruelly and mercilessly scourged,
And women fainted at the sight of it,
While Pilate cursed his own impotency.
When the dread flagellation was at end,
The soldiers led Him back into the court
Which is Prætorium, called their whole band,
And clothed Him there in purple for a show,
Took Herod's crown of thorns and put it on Him,
And placed within His hand a hollow reed
For scepter, and with heartless jeers and taunts
Saluted Him: "Hail, King! King of the Jews!"
And bowed to Him their knees in mockery
As if to worship Him, then spat upon Him,
And smote Him with the reed and with their hands,
Till Pilate thinking still to succor Him
And make amends, and call again once more
On the dead pity of the multitude,
Did bring Him forth, wounded and sore and bleeding,

Wearing the purple garb and crown of thorns,
And in the indignation of his soul,
Half in impatience from his scorn of self:
"Behold, again I bring Him out to you
That ye may know I find no crime in Him."
And so as He stood forth did Pilate then,
Looking upon the Uncomplaining One,
Struck by His bearing and mute majesty,
Cry out the thrilling words:
"Behold the Man!"

And when the chief priests and the officers
Saw Him they feared for Pilate's clemency,
And cried out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"
And Pilate:
"Take ye Him yourselves,
And crucify Him if it pleaseth you,
For I find no fault in Him, and no crime."

Then the Jews answered him, "We have a law
And by that law He surely ought to die,
Because He made Himself the Son of God.
Thou knowest 'tis not lawful for the *Jews*
To put a man to death, under the law.
If 'twere, for this thing had we punished Him;
Then why sayst thou to us, '*Ye* crucify?'"

Now Pilate, when he heard the asserted claim
That Jesus made Himself the Son of God,
Was yet the more afraid, and went with Him
Once more into the palace, and there said to Him,
"Whence art Thou?" Still the Master answered not.
Then Pilate: "Speakest Thou not unto me?
Know'st not that I have power to release Thee
And power also still to crucify?"
And then spake Jesus in mild deference,
"Thou wouldst have no power at all against Me,
Were it not given to thee from above,
So he that did deliver Me to thee
Hath greater sin."
Now Pilate was abashed
And much perplexed, and sought still to release Him,
But the Jews cried aimlessly against it, till
Some calculating leader raised the shout:
"If thou release this Man thou art not friend
Of Cæsar, under whom thou servest here,
For whoso maketh of himself a king
Speaketh against the Cæsar."
And then Pilate,
Bringing him forth, resumed his judgment seat,

And with fierce sarcasm — to goad their pride —
Edged with the bitter poison of self-scorn
As his weak courage slowly oozed away
Under the charge implied — treason to Cæsar —
Which drowned his just intentions once again,
Drew their attention to the Thorn-Crowned One
Standing oblivious to their petty play,
While he called to the Jews, "Behold your King!"
And they retorted in yet fiercer shouts,
"Away with Him! Away and crucify Him!"
Then Pilate: "Shall I crucify your King?"
And they, O shame! (who daily cried for freedom,
With bitter hatred of the rule of Rome)
Voiced the slaves' shout: "We have no king but Cæsar!"
Then the base, trembling judge delivered Him
(And under the authority of Rome)
Unto their hatred to be crucified.

STAGE VII

THE CRUCIFIXION

NOW to the legionaries' custody
Was there delivered up the Christ condemned,
Sentenced to horrid death upon the Cross
By one who still declared His innocence,
And doubtless did believe what he proclaimed,
But gave Him not the benefit of it.
And now again the heartless soldiers mocked Him,
And stript Him of the purple robe; the crown,
Its thorns and branches clotted with His blood,
They threw aside, and on Him put again
His own plain, simple garments. On His shoulders,
Still bleeding from the lacerating scourge,
They placed the heavy Cross which was to bear
His living body in its dying hours,
Then shouting hoarsely, urged Him on with it
Towards the skull-shaped hill of Calvary.
But now exhausted from the loss of blood
And loss of sleep and loss of sympathy —
For the whole world seemed to abandon Him —
He bent beneath the burden of its weight
And scarce could bear it up, but staggered on

Till a stout countryman, who, passing near
(Simon, a pilgrim there from far Cyrene),
The legionaries pressed to bear His load
And follow after, to forestall delay,
Pricking him to it with their pointed spears.
Not he reluctant to assume Christ's burden,
But shrank from touch of the accursèd tree,
Yet now he followed Him with stooping shoulders
And downward gaze, noting the ruddy drops
That sprinkled His sad path to Golgotha,
To there be offered up a sacrifice
On the crossed altar for the whole world's sins.
So as they passed, a mighty multitude
Did follow Him, and women of the city,
Wringing their hands, wailed and lamented Him,
But Jesus, turning sadly, said to them:
" Ye daughters of Jerusalem, weep not,
Weep not for Me, but weep ye for yourselves
And for your children; for behold the days
Are surely coming in which they shall say,
' Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bare,
And so the breasts that never did give suck;'
Then shall they say to mountains, ' Fall on us!'
And to the silent hills, ' O cover us!'
For if they do these things in the green tree,
What shall there likely be done in the dry? "

And when they came to the allotted place,
They nailed the Master to the bitter Cross,
And so, on either side, a malefactor,
Which Jesus seeing, understood the insult
They sought to put upon Him even in death,
Yet murmured not, but in His torture:
"Father,
Forgive them, for they know not what they do."
So He begged mercy for His enemies
And full forgiveness for His persecutors,
And while the prayer is still upon His lips,
And He in agony nailed to the Cross,
About its foot the heartless Roman guard
Gamble for the division of His raiment
With cold indifference and ribald jests.

Now Pilate had writ, partly in sullen awe
And in deep admiration of the Man,
Partly in scorn of His fierce persecutors
And their unwearying hatred of the Master,
This superscription in three several tongues,
That all might understand and notice it,
And fixed it on His cross above His head:
"THIS IS JESUS THE KING — KING OF THE JEWS."
So did the weakling triumph in defeat,
Serving unwittingly the cause of God,
And answering his own question, "What is truth?"

The truth he thus judicially declared,
For so the law required that whoso suffered
Upon the Cross, his crime should be inscribed
Upon a placard fixed above his head:
So this the fact and this the sole offense.

King of the Jews? Yea, King of all the
World!
And Crown Prince of the Universe as well.
But they recked not His spiritual kingdom,
And so took umbrage at the written findings
And were appalled and branded regicides.
So the rank failure of their foul success
Blanched many a cheek and stifled many a heart
That erst beat but in wrath; but some did rally
From their dismay, and said half pleadingly,
Half in shamefaced confusion, unto Pilate,
After they'd read the fateful superscription,
"Write it not flatly thus: 'The King of the
Jews,'
But that He *said*, 'I am the King of the Jews.'"
Then Pilate, turning on them stolidly:
"What I have written, I have written. Ye
hypocrites,
Now bear your portion in this day's foul work!
Dream ye of blood, and sacrificial robes!
Rant ye of Galileans slain by me,
Then dream again of Him now on the Cross

By your insistence and your venomous threats,
And my own worse, perhaps. Go watch Him die."
So he dismissed them fiercely, and strode off.

Yet many about the Cross reviled Him still,
Some wagged their heads at Him as they passed by,
And some of these were chief priests, some were scribes,
Some learnèd elders, fallen to mockery,
Like graceless beggars without shame or fear,
Admitting His great works upon a time
That so they might belittle Him by contrast:
"Others He saved, Himself He cannot save.
If He is Israel's King, let Him come down
From off the Cross, and we'll believe on Him.
He also said, 'I am the Son of God!'
Let God deliver Him, if God desire Him."
Even the robbers in their agony,
Like Him expiring in slow torture there,
Joined in the passing current of reproach
Their own revilings, but He answered not
To them, or any, until one of them,
Struck by His boundless love and lasting patience,
Warmed in his heart toward Him as o'er his soul
Streamed the effulgence of a living faith,

And he rebuked his fellow, calling out,
"We do but suffer justly, so receiving
The due reward of our own evil deeds;
But this Man surely hath done naught amiss."
And he believed on Him, and turning said,
"Jesus, remember me when soon thou comest
Into Thy Kingdom."
And then Christ, intent:
"I say it unto thee, yea verily
To-day thou'lt be with Me in Paradise."

From the sixth hour crept darkness o'er the land,
Men saw each other dimly through the gloom,
And the earth quaked and moved in creeping waves
Like swelling waters on a half-calmed sea,
And rocks were rent, and the parched ground was riven,
And tombs were burst asunder; from their graves
Many arose that had long slept in death,
And some entered again the Holy City,
Upon the darkened streets appearing to many.
Within the Temple was the great veil rent
(Hanging as 'twas before the Holy Place)
From top to bottom, as if shorn asunder
By some omnipotent arm with keen-edged blade.

Now was there standing near unto His Cross
The mother of the Christ, and so her sister,
Mary the wife of Clopas, and that Mary,
Loving so much, even she of Magdalene;
And when He saw His mother lingering there,
And John, the lone disciple, whom he loved —
Most faithful of the Twelve, and yet not blameless —
He spoke unto the first, and solemnly:
"Woman, behold thy son!"
and unto John:
"Behold thy mother!"
and both understood,
And were of the same household from that hour.

Then called He from the all-surrounding gloom
And fierce storm of derision and rude scoffings,
In a loud voice appealing unto God,
In tones that thrilled and quivered on the air,
And shook with vibrant pain His prison post,
"Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani?"
Which in the wording of our mother tongue:
"My God, My God, why'st Thou forsaken Me?"
And then again was silent for a time.
But some who heard it, said, "He called Elijah,"

And unto one that offered to Him drink,
" Stay! Let us see if Elijah succor Him."

But knowing now that all things were accomplished
And come to pass according to the Word,
He for a moment thought upon Himself,
And in the burning agony of death
Spake simply so:
" I thirst."
And one
There of the soldiers unto His parched lips
Lifted a sponge laden with vinegar
Upon a hyssop stalk, and tasting it
He murmured,
" It is finished!"
and was still.
Then with one loud and inarticulate cry,
And trembling of the flesh, He bowed His head,
And gave His spirit up again to God.
And when He'd uttered, the Centurion
And others of the guard in charge of Him
Said, " Of a truth, this was the Son of God,"
And they and others so believed on Him.

So did His death bring converts to His cause,
And so His death was greater than His life,
In that it proved the grandeur of His life,—

Its deep unselfishness, its conquering love,
Its horror of the hatefulness of sin,
Its brimming mercy and sweet, swift forgiveness
To all who craved it, leaving sin behind,
Its tireless zeal in calling to repentance
The wayward and abandoned of the world,
Its lessons that the value of all souls
Is equal in the spiritual scales of God
Without regard to those who harbor them,
And that men's souls are worth God's sacrifice,
Even in the person of His Holy Son.

But now as His head sank with His last cry,
And all the multitude saw what was done,
Deep fear and sorrow seized upon the throng
And they moved mournfully back toward the City,
Offering aloud to God in pleading tones
Belated prayers for Him they 'd crucified,
Beating their breasts in frenzy of despair
For all the ills done on that fateful day;
But not the priests and scribes and Sadducees
Joined in their wailings. These bethinking them
That in that time the Christ could scarce be dead,
Yet wishing it, and that without delay,
That on the approaching Sabbath, not a cross
Should still be burdened with its awful load,

Pleaded with Pilate that the three be slain
If that they still survived, so that their bodies
Might be in earth with the retiring sun.
So were the culprits slain, their legs being broken;
Death came in the rude shock, but Christ had passed.
Still to make sure, a member of the guard
Thrust his keen spear into the Savior's side,
And the returning point was followed out
By the pure ransoming blood of The Great Heart,
Mixed in clear serum where the golden bowl
Had rested in its life's activities,
Showing that for men's trespasses and sins,
And their ingratitude for all He'd done,
And their rude scorning of His proffered Love,
Even on the Cross in torturing agony,
The Son of Man died of a broken heart.

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